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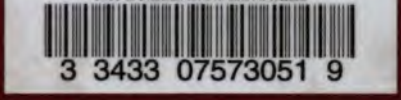
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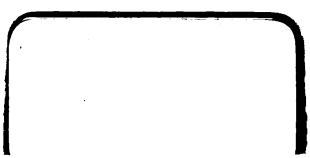

# THE GAME OF LIFE.

BY

LEITCH RITCHIE.

---

"——I have set my life upon a cast,
And I will stand the hazard of the die."

SHAKSPEARE.

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TWO VOLUMES IN ONE.

PHILADELPHIA:
PUBLISHED BY EDWARD C. MIELKE,
NO. 181, MARKET STREET.

1833.

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TO

## THOMAS PRINGLE, ESQ.

My dear Pringle,

I am gazing just now from the upper windows of my habitation. A waste of snow extends before and around, as far as the eye can reach, and being unrelieved and unbroken either by hills or valleys, or trees, it looks like a winding-sheet hiding the features of the dead. There is not a cloud in the sky—or rather all is cloud, and of that dull, grey, dismal hue, to which black itself is something gay and lively. Through this solid barrier the sun can no more insinuate himself than he who died a-Wednesday can walk forth from his leaden coffin. The snow, therefore, has nothing dazzling in its whiteness, and the unwounded eye is at liberty to pursue its career over the interminable plain, till it returns of its own accord in weariness and satiety. It is necessary to remind you that my hermitage is not perched near the borders, or upon the bosom of the frozen sea, but in delightful France, and within a short walk of the grave of our Norman William.

Six weeks ago, having succeeded in scraping an eye-hole with my nail upon the frozen window, I was earnestly employed in observing the same amusing scene, when suddenly an appearance presented itself, or seemed to present itself to my optics, which I trust you will allow was a *psychological*, or a *sight*-ological *curiosity*.

The hue of the snow, as I gazed, seemed gradually to approximate to that of the clouds; its uniformity of tint disappeared; and the colouring matter, if matter it be, appeared to move, and roll, and break, like waves of the sea. Presently the agitation subsided; but, instead of sinking into its former level, like the ocean, when the wind has died away, the surface before me was broken into darker and loftier points, and into deep lines of shadow, intersecting each other at every imaginable angle, and conveying the idea of innumerable streets, and terraces, and squares, and spires. The next day the same illusion was repeated, but with greater vividness. A wilderness of houses seemed to stand before me; towers, domes, and columns rose proudly amidst the throng; the earth was cumbered with the shadowy load, and the heavens pierced with its jagged outline. On the third day, in addition to all, and more than all I had before observed, one huge, dark dome rose like a giant in the very middle of the picture. I could feel my heart beat, my cheek flush, and my eyes sparkle without knowing why; till at length a sudden light seemed to circle—waver—fix above its monstrous head; and, as a Golden Cross rising from a Golden Ball, became distinctly visible, I knew that the edifice before me was St. Paul's Cathedral, and the City it commanded and adorned, the mighty Babylon of the earth!

My idleness was no more the idleness of ennui; my waking dreams were filled, not with shadows, but, realities; I lived over again my years of metropolitan adventure; I walked again with the strange comrades I had fallen in with on my way; my thoughts, rioted on the past; and my pen ever too ready to follow my thoughts, committed the medley to paper. In the following sheets I present you with a group cut out of the back ground of the picture. The characters, whether natural or not, are drawn from nature, and the greater part of the action is culled from the history of those on whose veracity I can place reliance.

If a single individual of that host of high-spirited and chivalrous adventurers, who rush every day from the extremities of the kingdom, to plunge headlong into the gulf of the metropolis, shall be led by this narration to think of "counting the cost before undertaking the work," I shall be amply repaid for my labour. At all events I have secured one advantage by it, which has no small value in my eyes; and that is, the opportunity of declaring publickly with what esteem and affection, I am,

My dear Pringle,

Ever faithfully your's,

LEITCH RITCHIE.

*Cormelles, near Caen,*
*January 25th.* 1830.

# THE GAME OF LIFE.

## CHAPTER I.

### *In which the Fire is poked, the Candles snuffed, and the Backgammon Table opened.*

Tell me, by all your art I conjure ye,
Yes, and by truth, what shall become of me;
Find out my star, if each one as you say,
Have his peculiar angel, and his way.—
Is it your art can only work on those
That deal with dangers, dignities, and clothes?
With love, or new opinions? You all lie!
A fish-wife hath a fate, and so have I.

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

EVERY body knows the village of Dornton.—It is situated on the road from Bath to London, (as the Gazetteer hath it,) and who has not travelled from Bath to London? It consists of some two or three dozen houses placed parallel with the road on either side, the vista closed in the townward direction by a church, somewhat large for the place; and in the other by an eminence approaching to the character of a hill, around the base of which sweeps the mail-coach road. The church in architecture is a mere steeple-house; it is neither old nor new; neither possessing attractions for the antiquary by its connexions with past times, nor for the mere man of to-day as belonging peculiarly to his own. The other buildings which constitute the village are in no manner different from

those of other villages, except in the total want of that picturesque appearance which sometimes marks the abodes of the poorer and more solitary classes; nor are they distinguished from each other but as being in some instances houses of one story, and in others houses of two. There are no gentlemen's seats in the immediate neighbourhood, nor is there much of that sort of scenery which draws the wealthy lover of nature away from the busier congregations of his kind. The village of Dornton is in short one of those places at which the traveller pauses to wonder what motive could have induced its founders to choose for their abiding place, from among all the fair valleys and fertile plains of merry England, a spot so utterly destitute of human and natural interest.

On the side of the hill mentioned as forming a termination to the vista through the village, stood a tenement somewhat larger than the others, and which, though not arriving, even with the assistance of its neat inclosures and Lilliputian lawn, at the dignity of a gentleman's seat, yet presented an appearance of absolute gentility when compared with its ruder neighbours. The avenue ran up from the road in the most direct and business-like manner possible, as if in utter contempt of the line of beauty, and altogether the arrangements bore the stamp of a taste more formal than fashionable. The owner and occupier of this mansion, which was known by the name of The Mount, was Mr. Vesper. a gentleman of whom, for reasons which will be speedily apparent, we must in this place proceed to give some account. His family was so inconsiderable, that his origin could never be traced beyond his grandfather. His father had been in some small way of business—a shopkeeper, we are afraid—in a neighbouring town, in which he had promised himself the assistance of his two sons when the infirmities of age or ill health might render himself incapable of active exertion. His parental anticipations, however, were never realized. His eldest and favourite son, a fine youth, just rising into manhood, with character and prospects, according to his humble station in life, as fair even as father could wish, fell by some unaccountable imprudence

into association with companions of low and desperate habits; and gradually sinking from comparative respectability into contempt, at length fled from his friends and native place, not again to return. Into this dismal fall it was supposed he was precipitated by the example or seduction of a young man of somewhat better fortune and prospects, whose name was Wilkins. Wilkins, who was imagined at first to be led into vice by the mere exuberance of his animal spirits, turned out a very desperate character, and owed his life, it was said, to the benevolence of a gentleman of high respectability, called Fisher, who declined prosecuting him for a robbery, aggravated by assault, although he was taken in the fact. As for Vesper, he closed the catalogue of his crimes in the country by marrying under a false character and name a beautiful girl of good family, whom he deserted when in a state of pregnancy; and all that could be learnt of him afterwards was, that he found his way by some means to America, where he died.

The unhappy father did not live long after, and the younger son was thrown loose upon the world, without friends or money, at an age when the counsels of experience and the restraining hand of parental authority are most wanted. His life, however, was destined to be in many respects the reverse of that of his brother's. The terrible example was not thrown away upon him, nor were the months which he spent at the bed-side of his dying and broken-hearted father. Their little fortune had been much injured by the excesses of the unfortunate youth, and was almost totally exhausted by the old man's illness; it may be supposed, therefore, that the bed of sickness and death was not frequently surrounded by sympathizing friends. The misfortunes of the family had at first attracted some interest; the shutting up of the shop, so long remembered as the scene of late and early industry, excited the pity and curiosity of the neighbourhood, and the father and son were followed to the obscure lodging they chose, with kind inquiries and condolence. These, as times rolled on, became fewer and fainter; the old man did not get better,

and the son was seen seldomer out, so that both at last were almost forgotten.

To minister to his father's wants was now William Vesper's only business, and to read to him his only amusement. The book in most cases easiest of attainment is the best, and the Bible, which he took up at first in filial obedience, with a feeling almost amounting to disgust, became speedily a source of comfort and recreation even to himself. With the progress of his disease, the sick man's mental faculties became disturbed, and, reverting in the aberrations of his mind to the scenes and circumstances of his former hopes, the poor father would fancy himself still the master of his little business, issue his commands with a melancholy air of pride, and call to his assistants by their names, sometimes with reproach for their idleness, and sometimes with encouragement.

But the name most frequently in his mouth on such occasions, was that of his lost and darling son, and he would struggle vehemently with the suggestions of returning reason, as it would force upon him, as if in the person of another, the fatal reality.

"It is fasle," he would cry," "he has not forsaken his poor, fond father? You are all in league against him—you hate him because he is so beautiful, and proud-looking.—Tush, tush, what are the follies of a boy? When his head is as grey as mine he will know better. But he shall not drink, nor swear, nor stay out of nights any more; I will call him this moment and scold him soundly. Henry! Henry!—What, not within?—Well, wait a little, he will come presently; he is only at the fair or the tavern. Why does he not come?—It cannot be true that he has left me!—Is it indeed?—Well—well—well—Oh, Henry, my son, my son!" and as the fatal truth broke on his recovered reason, the poor old man would throw himself back on the bed, from which he had raised himself to look out for the coming of him who once would not, and now could not hear, and give way to the most passionate lamentations. It was the custom of William when he

began to read to his father any of the books of the New Testament, to go regularly through, although necessarily meeting with many passages in documents coming so home to the business and bosom of all men, which severely probed the yet bleeding wound: and one night when the invalid, although calm, was somewhat worse than usual, it was with a pause of dismay, he beheld the well known title of the chapter, following the one he had just finished—"The parable of the Prodigal Son."

He looked at his father, but the old man seemed intently listening for the continuance of the reading, his eyes turned towards him with even more intelligence than usual, and he went on, but in a lower voice, and turning by fits, a timid look towards the bed, to watch the effect which might be produced. At the account of the prodigal's sufferings in a far country, he could see his father's lips tremble, and his breast heave; but when he came to the return of the wanderer, where it is said, "when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him," the old man raised himself up on his pillow, and bending his dim eyes on vacancy, as if it contained some real presence, and stretching forth his shrivelled arms, as to some palpable embrace, would have fallen from the bed, had he not been caught in the arms of his son. It was strange to witness the magical effect of imagination, in converting every thing to its own purpose, changing even palpable and accustomed forms into its own phantasms, and peopling the void of that small chamber with its visionary creations. "Henry," said the old man, looking fondly up in William's face, "it was not well done to leave your poor father, but you are sorry for it—you weep. Well, well, we'll talk no more of it—it is forgotten and forgiven, and we shall all be happier than ever. But who is this?" he continued, turning his head—"Oh, I forgot—you are married, and that lady with her long dark hair, and snow-white hands, is the bride of my Henry. Another!—What small face is this, looking up to me with its innocent eyes, mine are so dim now, and yet I can see Henry

in every feature. William too, he 'was ever with me,' and must be with me to the last. Bless ye, my sons, and my daughter, bless thee, sweet little one, bless—bless all."—William allowed his father's head to sink slowly from his arms, and received his last gentle sigh as it touched the pillow.

As we have more to do with the afternoon, than with the morning of William Vesper's life, we must be permitted to pass lightly over the rest of his history till he is wanted for the purposes of our tale.

In turning from the situation in which we have just left him, to view him as the master of The Mount, at Dornton, a superficial observer would be apt to infer that it must have been a train of fortunate circumstances which conducted him to such comparative and indeed positive independence. But if it suited us to depict individually the struggles of the poor and friendless youth with a mean and interested world, the conflict of an upright and virtuous mind, amidst the servile, the crafty, and the base, the bitter communings of a spirit, overshadowed even in its noon of strength by misfortune, when surrounded by the frivolous, the idle, and the dissipated, another view of the question might be taken. The impression made on him by the death-scene we have described, was never effaced. He seemed as if surrounded wherever he went by the phantoms conjured up by the diseased imagination of his father, and for many years after, every strange face he saw, brought some token of it home to his remembrance; often has he stood still in the crowded street, to gaze after some form as it glanced past him, which seemed to resemble the lady with the "long dark hair and snow-white hands," who was to him no creature of the fancy; and many a mother has been made proud by his inquiries after her little one, in whose "innocent eyes" he detected some resemblance to his lost brother.

In the meantime however years rolled on, and no tidings reached him respecting the forsaken family. Years rolled on,

bringing with them even more than their usual complement of cares, vexations, and disappointments, and even fewer of their compensating enjoyments. Love passages too—and in whose life are they wanting?—came in the midst, and in them also Vesper was unfortunate: but these are matters of every day, too stale and common to awaken the sympathy of the most confirmed novel reader. It was long after this disdisappointment, that an opportunity occurred of naturally assisting a friend, by exchanging the small sum of money he had by that time acquired, and which was nearly the whole of his worldly possessions, for some landed property in the neighbourhood of Dornton.

When he went to take possession of his Lilliputian estate, it was not with the intention of living there, nor had he even formed a resolution to relinquish the cares of business, and sit down contented with the small acquisitions he had made. But the most important events in a man's life are frequently brought about by trifles, or by circumstances which might seem to a looker-on to be the least calculated to produce them. The very bleakness of the prospect that met his view, when looking out from the cottage window, and the dull uninteresting appearance of the village, were positive attractions to him in his present mood of mind.

"I can live here," said he, "and what more could I do elsewhere? I have already some books, and can still afford to purchase more; I shall have leisure to indulge my own thoughts, and money to procure, in the moderation I have ever accustomed myself to, my own fancies. What if I have not yet reached the age or the fortune when a man commonly thinks it time to forsake the world—my wealth is equal to my wants, and if the first days of the years of my pilgrimage have not been productive of much worldly happiness, what could I expect for the remainder? It shall be so—this is the first resting-place I have reached which I could properly call my own—I am tired, and will go no further.

In pursuance of this determination, Mr. Vesper set himself

seriously to prepare The Mount for his "winter quarters," as he termed it, looked forward to the dark and cold season of human life. This afforded him occupation for some time, and even amusement; then his books came into requisition, and the intended additions to his library were to be carefully selected and ordered; by degrees he became acquainted with the inhabitants of the village, and interested in their little concerns and family matters, sometimes their benefactor, as far as his limited means permitted, and always their counsellor and friend. Nor was he long of falling in with a friend himself—at least, if not a friend in the most refined sense of the word, with a companion. The curate was a well-disposed, and even religious man, although not of the highest march of intellect, and among his other accomplishments played an excellent hit at backgammon. Mr. Vesper, in short, although we have not room to dilate upon the nothings which filled up his life, found himself decidedly within the region of old bachelorism, while hardly conscious of the lapse of time which had taken place.

Even the love-passages hinted at above, were now forgotten, or remembered only as the amusement of a moment, when pacing backwards and forwards through his little parlour, he busied himself in calling to mind the adventures of his past life. This is the fate of all our youthful feelings, however sweet or bitter they may have been, yet it was not without a certain sense of shame that Mr. Vesper recollected what he now termed the silly exaggerations of fancy in representing the "blow" as altogether irrecoverable, and the gloom which darkened over his brow, as the production of

> "One fatal remembrance—one sorrow that throws
> Its bleak shade alike o'er our joys and our woes;
> O'er which life nothing brighter, nor darker can fling—
> For which joy has no balm, and affliction no sting."

The early part of the day was devoted to healthful labour, the evening to reading or conversation, and the whole sanctified by a strict and methodical attention to his moral and religious duties. Time flew away unheeded but not unimproved,

and to all human appearance Mr. Vesper was destined to pass his quiet, but not useless life, undisturbed by the cares of the world, and to sink at last into the grave attended only by that calm regret which follows the good and respectable, who are without any of those nearer ties of kindred and affection which render a man's life so valuable and his death so calamitous. A circumstance occurred, however, which overturned the equilibrium of his mind, deranged his plans, and drove him from his hermitage, at the age of fifty years, a sort of knight-errant into the world.

His lost brother was at length heard of, but his name was repeated only as the echo of a sound that had passed by, for the owner was no more. Fortune, instead of curses, had rained treasures upon him in the New World; but his heart, as he became rich, did not become more human. His home and his family were forgotten till the last, and it was only when the event of his struggle became certain that his thoughts were borne across the Atlantic on the pinions of pity or remorse. He divided his fortune, by will, in equal parts between his brother and his child, either in compliance with the common usages of men, or as an atoning act of justice and mercy, and then calmly, as it was said, resigned his soul to judgment. This is all that can be said. We know nothing of his feelings, while dictating the will, or of his mind's history since he quitted Europe; he has left no justification upon record; he was willing that, with regard to men at least, the tree should lie where it fell—and let it do so. Mr. Vesper renewed his exertions to trace out the family of his brother, but without success; and when the proper time had elapsed, he found himself the undisputed master of a handsome fortune. He enlarged his house as a matter of course, although it is not stated how much his accession of wealth increased his physical bulk; he extended his library, the home of his mind, in proportion; he added many hundred of acres to his demesne, and nearly a hundred names to his memorandum book of probation and beneficence, and then he

began again to play backgammon with the curate, and argue, or rather lecture, on the motives and actions of mankind.

Experience, however, in this sober game, seemed to have quite the opposite effect to what it usually has; for when he played, it was the oftener the worse; or else his antagonist (which, by the way, was the curate's own opinion) increased so marvellously in skill that it was quite loss of time to contend with him. The more books he bought the seldomer he read; and the more familiar access he obtained to other men's minds, the more he indulged himself in the unsupported speculations of his own. As the circle of his territory extended, his walks were contracted; and at length, in proportion as the things that are usually the objects of man's pride and ambition, spread rapidly over the now considerable area of his estate, he acquired the habit of confining himself to the narrow limits of his parlour, surrounded by books with uncut leaves, and portfolios with untied strings.

His eyes, however, were more excursive than his feet; they dwelt for hours together on the far and misty expanse of the world before him, which he could see from the window spread out like a map; he became curious in telescopes, which at such times of observation he seemed to use as reading glasses, and was as diligently employed in watching the varying aspects of distant objects as a mariner at sea. When he had amused himself in this manner till amusement became weariness, he would lay down his glass with a sigh, and pace for another hour through his little chamber: then the business of the day, and this word included his charities, must be attended to; then his solitary meal would while away another syllable of his unrecorded time; then the dying daylight would draw him again to the window to gaze on the distant world till it withdrew from his vision into the shades of night; and then darkness bringing forth her unnatural offspring, candlelight, would present the short round face of the curate and the mimic volume, which, instead of the national history it promised, only contained within its chequered world the sha-

dows of whole years of busy idleness. The curate one evening was rubbing his hands with glee at his own remarkable skill, or the remarkable stupidity of his companion, which was hurrying him on to a double triumph.

"Deuces, a pair!" cried the good man in a transport, "and almost the only covered point in my chequer. Well, now it is my turn—ah, poor dear Mr. Vesper, I hold your destiny in the box; and out it comes in the shape of defeat and dismay. But try it again, good sir, just to exercise the elbow. Well done; you enter with both, but it was not in the dice to do otherwise, every point being open. And now for the last—quatre, cinq—a gammon, as I'm a sinner!" and he threw himself back from his chair, pushed his spectacles up from his overflowing eyes, and emitted such a genuine, unsophisticated laugh of good-humoured triumph and delight, as would have made the demon of gaming, had he been looking on, run out of hearing.

"Nay, now," said the winner, in a soothing tone, when he had recovered from his ecstacy, "never take it so to heart, man—there is a time coming for us all. And, yet, truth to speak, I get rather an overmatch for you at the game—I think I improve. But you are thoughtful, and, of a surety, to lose a gammon is enough to make a man think! Is it the oversight you committed, may I ask, in entering rather behind, than into the six point of my chequer when it was your cue to run, that engages your meditations; or the extraordinary perversity of the dice in turning up deuces three times running when the point was a dead cover? What *are* you thinking of?" continued the Curate with startled emphasis, as he observed through his spectacles an appearance of awkwardness and perplexity on the usually placid features of his friend.

"I am thinking," said Mr. Vesper, slowly, "of the resemblance which exists between this back-gammon-table and the great field of the world." But this was a resemblance which he had so often detected and enlarged upon, that the Curate thought no further remark necessary than the common one of

acquiescence, which some people deem it becoming to make use of when mankind is brought down from their stilts by a degrading comparison.

"Ah, true," said he—"we are all blind, senseless creatures—stocks and stones—stocks and stones; but, how? well?" he continued, still bending forward, with his mouth half open to receive the reply, and his face raised as if to admit of his seeing from beneath his spectacles.

"I am thinking," said Mr. Vesper, "that it would be more interesting than a game at back-gammon if one could look on 'amid the crowd, the strife, the shock of men,' in some of the busier haunts of humanity, without being personally engaged in the struggle, and disturbed by the selfish feelings of individual interest and preservation."

"Very true, very true," replied the Curate, "but, how? well?"

"When I was in the world," continued Mr. Vesper, "it was not as a looker-on, but as an actor; my knowledge of mankind is therefore confined to the narrow circle of the arena in which it was my lot to struggle for life and bread, and even then my views of men and things must have been influenced by prejudice and modified by my own individual character. I am now rich. I have no one to care for; to become a second self is the faculty of blinding or distorting the moral optics."

"And how? well?" said the Curate, out of all patience, as Mr. Vesper stopped abruptly.

"Ring!" said his friend, "the bell is behind you." But before the Curate had half finished the motion of turning round in his usual sedate and methodical manner, Mr. Vesper had strided from the other side of the table, laid hold of the tintinnabulant appendage with the grasp of a vice, and sent such a larum peal through the regions of the kitchen as had never been heard before in the memory of Betty.

"Betty!" said her master, as she entered the room almost in the same instant, like a spirit conjured up by the sound, holding still in her hand an empty tea-saucer, from which she had been sipping her evening beverage, its late contents being transferred to her apron—"Run down, Betty, to the Griffin, and engage a seat for me in the mail to-morrow." Aghast and bewildered, yet mechanically obeying, Betty started off to execute the extraordinary commission, and her feet in a moment were heard clattering along the gravelled avenue.

"My worthy neighbour is clean distraught!" thought the Curate, "his mind has been wavering these three weeks; ever since the dice began to go against him; and now this unlucky gammon has finished the business. My excellent friend," said he, turning soothingly to the patient, "I will never win another game from you in my life?"

"Many, many, my dear sir!" said Mr. Vesper, his awkwardness and embarrassment gone, and an air of cheerful decision presiding over his manner.

"And how? well?" exclaimed the Curate, startled by his friend's calmness. "Are you really going to leave us? And whither are you bound, if one might crave to learn? and for what purpose do you travel?"

"I am really going to leave you for a season," said Mr. Vesper, replying methodically to his categorist, "I am bound for more places than I can number in a breath, and my purpose is to play a GAME OF LIFE."

## CHAPTER II.

### *Arrangement of the Game.*

It is necessary to know that there are thirty-six chances upon two dice, and the points that are upon these thirty-six chances are as follow—

HOYLE.

"The world was all before him," but he knew no more than the first traveller, Adam, "where to choose." He had not a single relative alive, of consanguinity near enough to warrant a visit, or of character interesting enough to invite one; and his early friendships had been all dissolved long ago either by the touch of death, or the as fatal intervention of living interest. The distant world of society to him presented an appearance resembling that of the physical aspect of the earth when the space selected by the eye is too far off to be distinguished in its natural inequalities of height and hollow. It was like an immense plain filled with moving images, confused and indistinct, no individual of which overtopped its fellows, or demanded peculiar observation. But at length one spot on the dim surface of the picture presented to his mind's eye, began to assume a more definite character, and awaken a more lively interest. The thought recurred to him again and again of her whom in fantastic youth his imagination had exalted into a goddess; who had sported with his happiness so cruelly and left off the fatal pastime so heartlessly; who was now a wife and a mother, and in both situations an important link in that chain of society from which he appeared to be severed himself.

The Clives could not be rich, for when he knew them, and this by the way was some twenty years before, the husband was only a lieutenant in a marching regiment, and a man of the most idle and dissipated habits. Was he still alive? or had he died in youth and left the gay coquette the most miserable of all dependants, a dependant on herself? Their son the infant he had once seen, when his heart still bowed in recollected idolatry to the image of his lost Maria, had he redeemed the promise of that early age? Had heaven embued his heart with a portion of that Divine Spirit, which preserves it undefiled even by the vices of a parent! Was he tall, and strong, and beautiful—buoyant with youth and youthful hopes, rich in generous feelings, and pure and lofty aspirations? The tears started into Mr. Vesper's eyes, as a thousand such questions swept across his mind, and he felt bitterly, for the first time, the loneliness of his own situation. A thousand beautiful feelings arose and stirred within him—useful and admirable when employed, like the spirits of the wizard, but dangerous or fatal in their idleness; and as Michael Scott, for want of a better task assigned those troublesome slaves of his art the never-ending duty of weaving ropes of the sea-sand, to be unwoven again by the returning tide, so our childless and solitary traveller satisfied the cravings of his mind by acting the parent in his dreams, which the very next day would probably dissolve for ever.

Llanwellyn, a little town on the borders of Wales, where he had heard the Clives resided, was the place selected by Mr. Vesper for his outset in viewing the world. The town was indeed small, without much dignity either of nature or art—but what of that? This world is not built only of hills and houses; the spirit of man abides in its meanest village, and the spirit of God surrounds the whole like an atmosphere; it is constructed, in its noblest part, not of the piled stones of architecture, or the still more stupendous materials of external nature, but of human feelings and sentiments and passions of hopes and fears, of love and joy, and grief and triumph, and despair. At Llanwellyn, therefore, the traveller descen-

ded from the coach on the evening following the night on which he left home; and, after taking some refreshment at the inn, prompted by the not unpleasant restlessness of his feelings, he went out to explore the little town in search of Mr. Clive's house.

The day had been fine, and clear, and bracing, and his route had lain through a picturesque country, where the cottages seemed comfortable, and the peasantry bold, free, and contented. Every thing had conspired to produce cheerfulness and good humour in a benevolent mind like his; and, excited withal by the associations of almost chivalrous adventure, which a journey usually calls up in the fancy of an unfrequent traveller, it was with a light and quick, yet firm step that he strode along the street, and at length mounted the steps of the house he sought.

One might have thought, by his high and gallant air, that the visit was to a mistress, rather than to the grown-up family of a woman he had loved in youth; but, on closer inspection, it would have been discovered at a glance, that the days of poetry and delusion had for ever fled with him. The reigning expression of his face, which, in early life, had been melancholy, was now exalted by religion and philosophy, into a thoughtful seriousness; his brow, once reckoned handsome, was ploughed by time and care into deep furrows; large grey eye-brows gave, at a casual glance, a look almost of fierceness, to the calm, clear, blue orb they overhung; and in the mouth alone remained distinctly indicated, the benevolence characteristic of the man. His dress was in perfect keeping with his countenance. A plain brown coat, somewhat in the rear of the existing fashion, and yet not far enough so to excite remark; a wig nicely powdered, and of a form so old as to make it improbable that he would overtake and get beyond it before its time of service expired; a hat slightly approaching to the quaker; and a good old-gentlemanly stick of polished cane, were the principal items of which his costume was composed.

It may excite a smile to imagine a figure like this, hesitating for a moment at the door, before entering the presence of an early love. Mr. Vesper, however, did pause; his breathing was suspended for an instant; and, like the prince in eastern story, who seemed to undergo many years of vicissitude and adventure in the brief space in which his head was dipped in a basin of water, during that instant the thoughts of Mr. Vesper wandered over the thousand scenes of enchantment which he had once beheld, in the love-gilded visions of his youth. The next moment he stood before Mrs. Clive.

The once beautiful Maria was now a pale, thin, anxious-looking woman of forty years. There was still, however, in her figure, the shadowy remains of a gentility and even elegance of proportion, which twenty years ago, had rendered her the object of general admiration; and although the crow-foot prints of time were distinctly visible at the corners of her eyes, those heretofore stars of love, still exhibited, in their waning beams, a token and trace of early splendour.

Her dress was suited to the thread-bare and poverty-struck gentility of the apartment, in which a harp with tarnished gilding, a few books in the remains of elegant binding, and a Grecian couch minus the cover, contrasted strangely with dirty, unpapered walls, and a single curtainless window. Her gown was of rich, cut faded silk; a solitary spangle, still hanging by a thread to her small shoe, proclaimed that the wearer was either careless, or not unwilling that its old ball-room associations should be suggested to the spectator; and her head, luxuriant even now in beautiful dark hair, was wholly uncovered, as if to serve as a solitary witness against the crowded testimonies of forty years.

She was sitting beside an open trunk, surrounded by various folded articles, as if busily engaged in preparation for a journey; but when a stranger entered the room, unannounced by the servant, she rose hastily up, apparently ashamed of her employment. She saluted the visitor, however, with habitual grace and lady-like ease, and then paused for a moment to learn his pleasure.

Mr. Vesper was too busy with his own reflections to speak at once; his eye had embraced, with a single rapid glance, the whole details of the scene, and then returning, to fix upon the faded face before him, it was with a sigh, that seemed to exclaim, "Poor Maria!" he saluted her in the common forms of society. The smile which accompanied his address was enough for her. She made one step back with an air of conscious confusion, relieved, however, by the vainglorious recollections of youth; and then, scanning with an altered eye his time-furrowed countenance, lost herself for a few moments in a dream-like reverie. The faint hue, however, which had risen into her cheek, faded almost instantly; her eyes reverted to the open trunk, and her thoughts to the habitual cares and anxieties of a parent; and in another minute the jilted lover and the gay coquette were seated side by side on the couch—a grave elderly gentleman, and the mother of a grown-up son.

"And your husband?" said Mr. Vesper, in the midst of the interrogatories which are usually addressed to each other, by long separated acquaintances when they chance to meet again on the earth.

"Alas, sir," she replied, "Captain Clive has been dead these ten years! Were he alive, you should not have seen me in this miserable place; although, indeed, I must say, the street is the most fashionable in the town—quite the Mall, I assure you. Times are changed, however, that is certain—poor dear Clive!" and the widow applied her handkerchief to her eyes.

"You have, I trust the consolation—" said Mr. Vesper solemnly, "he died, I hope—" but recollecting that his hope was useless to the dead, and in all probability groundless, he stopped short.

"He died, said Mrs. Clive, "like a gentleman and an officer! And yet it was hard, very hard: at such a time, on the brink of promotion; with a wife still young, and a child of eleven years: without a guinea in the house, and no arrears of pay! Some people blamed him; they said he might have avoided

going out, without detriment to his honour—but I do not know; poor Clive was rash and thoughtless; seldom at home when he could help it; I was that day, myself, at a public breakfast: Willy was in the measles; and—and—the gentleman who killed him was a Colonel." The widow again applied her handkerchief to her eyes, which prevented her from seeing the surprised and indignant glare with which she was regarded by her visitor, who abruptly stood up to take his leave. A young lady, however, who had stolen into the room, and was quietly employed in packing the trunk, rose suddenly from her knees, and looking much distressed, and somewhat ashamed, took a part in the conversation.

"It was an affair of a moment, sir," said she with a deprecatory look to Mr. Vesper, "at least of an evening. The quarrel took place at supper, and the unhappy man remained with his companions till the morning. If a moment of reflection had been allowed him—if he had gone home and seen his helpless wife and his sick child—if he had lain in his own bed, and listened in the awful stillness of night, to the warnings of his heart, and the merciful inspirations of his God; oh, I am sure, I am very sure——" and as emotion choked her utterance, she turned away. Mr. Vesper looked at her for the first time, having been unconscious of her presence in the room till she spoke, and thought, as he gazed, he had never beheld an earthly being so fair. Her form, however, was too slight to be absolutely perfect, and her face too pale to be perfectly beautiful; but the intellectual glory which played in her blue eyes, would have made deformity itself seem divine. Her age did not seem to exceed seventeen; but owing to her calm and thoughtful air, and in part also, perhaps, to the form of the cap with which her auburn tresses were confined, her almost girlish figure appeared to be invested with even matronly dignity.

"It is beautiful," exclaimed Mr. Vesper aloud, although communing only with himself; his face lighted up with that radiant smile which sometimes makes age itself appear more

charming than the brightest bloom of youth; "It is beautiful to see a daughter palliating even the sins of her father, and striving to conceal their enormity, not only from others, but from herself, by looking at them only thus reflected in the pure prism of her own innocent and holy imagination!" The young woman turned pale while he was speaking, but after a moment's pause, with a calm manner, but in a tremulous voice, replied:

"It was of Captain Clive, sir, I spoke; for me, I have no father to defend—or to deplore." "She is an orphan," said Mrs. Clive, looking with unfeigned kindness at the poor girl—"but of a good family, at least on one side of the house; they turned her mother out of doors for choosing a husband for herself—and so the young couple became entirely destitute; and Mr. Howard being disappointed of a dowry, was not so kind to his wife as he might have been. But this is an old story now." "A good family!" mused the visitor—"But you, Mrs. Clive;" continued he aloud, apparently striving to palliate, or account for the illusions of his early life; "you received the forsaken child into your house; you became a friend to the friendless, a mother to the orphan. Did you not?"

"I had nothing in my power," replied Mrs. Clive.

"Oh, yes, indeed you had," cried Helen Howard, with animation. "You had a kind word, and a kind look for me when almost every body else was cold and silent; you have been in every way that I required, or could accept the obligation, my benefactress and my friend. As for affording me the charity of an assylum in your house, if the gentleman alluded to such a thing, I was a great strong girl when my poor mother died, my education was good and my spirit willing, I was, as I now am, in a worldly sense my own support, and all that I could reasonably ask—and which I readily, instantly found, was your countenance, your good wishes, and I hope your prayers." Mrs. Clive, who was really, in the common phrase a good natured, though weak-minded woman, was affected even to tears by this expression of gratitude or kindnesses,

trifling perhaps in themselves, and certainly bestowed from no steady or virtuous principle; but her son, the only child of her ill-fated marriage, who had joined the party in time to hear what had passed on the subject, as soon as the fair speaker had concluded, ran up to where she stood, and seizing on both her hands, exclaimed in a voice broken by emotion, yet deep, manly, and energetic—

"Helen, Helen, will you force me to doubt the singleness and integrity even of your own heart? Is it you who talk of obligation—you the unchangeable—the disinterested—the tender nurse of my sick mother, the counsellor of my blind and wayward self? What should we have done without you? Who would have sustained the feverish spirits I could only alarm and exasperate by my extravagance? and who now, when I am gone"—here the young man's voice became low and tremulous, and at the allusion to his approaching departure, was entirely drowned in the clamour of his weak mother's grief.

Mr. Vesper stood gazing on the unexpected picture with a sensation of choking which at length became intensely painful. William Clive remained looking in the fair orphan's face, with both her hands locked in his; and the spectator believed that he had never before seen traced on human features an admiration so absolutely devout. Helen herself met the gaze for some moments with an unshrinking eye; a proud and happy smile illumined her countenance, and a lightness and buoyancy in her air seemed to assert an affinity with one of those angelic forms which doubtless swam in unconscious analogy before the imagination of her worshipper. A soft flush at last broke on her cheek, and she suddenly withdrew her too ingenuous eyes. The mother, who had sat sobbing upon the couch, gazing upon her son, "as tow'rd a star," started as the town-clock told ten, and in an instant the passionate stillness of the scene, like a lake struck suddenly by a mountain gust, was shattered and dissolved.

The packing, however, had been already almost completed by the exertions of Helen, and after a very few moments more nothing remained to be done, except to deposit in a nook preserved for them the parting keepsakes of his mother and friend. Mrs. Clive, in the meantime, had taken the opportunity of letting her visitor into the secret of William's journey.

"I had hoped," said she, with a heavy sigh, "that I had interest enough to procure him at least an ensign's commission and surely that figure must have been intended by nature for the army! But, alas! from the moment in which I was driven by straitened circumstances into Wales, it seemed as if I had been driven from the world, and from the recollections of those who lived in it. Until now, I have managed, with the assistance of Helen, to pacify the poor boy, and keep him quietly at home; but dependance, even upon a mother, is bitter to a young spirit; and no doubt he thought it hard too, although the word never passed his lips, to be deprived so long of the little comforts, I may say necessaries, which are the very birthright of a gentleman. What could I do, however, with my poor forty pounds a year, but lately increased to fifty? I saved, it is true, all I could from dress and board to educate and clothe him like his class; and God knows that I would have saved more if he had let me: but when he would catch me stealing, as it were from myself, that he might not want a good coat on his back and a show-guinea in his purse, the fits of rage and desperation he would fly into never failed to frighten me into an illness that cost more than all the thefts of the sort I could commit in a month."

"And his destination now, my dear madam? inquired Mr. Vesper, with a sudden kindness and cordiality of manner, "O, London, London—he *will* go to London; and I am in hopes that with his figure and address, and a letter from me to our rich relations, the Blanks, and a recommendation to Mr. Irvine, the great East India merchant, he may do some good."

"To be sure," added Mrs. Clive, with a sigh, "I did not expect once on a day, that I should be reduced to hope to see my son in a counting-house!

"If you see your son in a counting-house, madam," said Mr. Vesper warmly, "you will see him in the same station with the first men of our country, for talent, integrity, and wealth: and you will probably see him in perhaps a very few years, if he conducts himself well, with a better salary than any captain's in the army. You will see him too, my good madam, much more reputably employed than any military man can hope to be in time of peace, or even in time of war, if the battles are not fought in defence of our own homes and altars. But London—London, though a proud, is a dangerous field: he may be longer idle than you imagine, and there is no vice more fatal than the absence of vice without the positive presence of virtuous exertion. However, I augur well both of his conduct and success; his thoughts at any rate," continued he with a melancholy smile, "his thoughts at least will be well employed and that is much. He is doubtless provided with money enough to keep him with strict economy for a reasonable time, and if—

"Now, mother, cried William, "your keepsake?"

"As for money," said Mrs. Clive, in a hurried whisper, for like most people who are fond of talking, she did not stop at half confidences—"there is no use in hiding——"

"Come, mother, Helen is just going."

"How much?" whispered Mr. Vesper, with impressible curiosity.

The widow blushed faintly, while she answered "Ten pounds."

She now took up a book from the table, the binding of which had once been superb, and was still, though tarnished rich-looking.

"It was your father's," said she, putting it into the hands of her son, "almost the only book I ever saw him read. Keep it for his sake and mine; I know you will be a good man, there is no need to talk to you about that—but never forget that you are a gentleman's son!" William kissed his mother's hand affectionately; but a deep blush suffused his face, when he saw that the prying, almost impertinent stranger had read the title over his shoulder; "*Chesterfield's Letters.*" Helen Howard now came forward with a timid look and a faultering step; she held a book half-concealed under her arm, which she rather slipped into William's hand than presented formally. The hands of the two young people met with the book between them, and they looked for an instant into each other's eyes, with an expression which partook as much of awe as tenderness. William then surrendered the treasure to his mother to be deposited in the trunk, and left the room in search of Helen's cloak and bonnet.

"I declare it is a bible," cried Mrs. Clive, in a tone of surprise, "well you are a good creature Helen." Mr. Vesper took the book from her hands, and in a voice not of surprise but of solemn pleasure, read the title aloud, '*The Holy Bible.*' Helen knelt once more beside the trunk, as if to inspect for the last time the arrangements, and a silence of some minutes prevailed in the room. William at length returned, the cloaking and bonneting was effected, and Helen, having given and received a cordial good night, took her departure escorted by her friend.

When they were gone, Mr. Vesper set himself to stride up and down the room as had been his custom at home; sometimes he smiled, and sometimes rubbed his hands and quickened his pace; till Mrs. Clive began to think it strange, and wondered within herself when he meant to go away. At length, catching up his hat, the eccentric visitor darted out of the room; but before finding his way to the door; he returned and shaking her by both hands, "Good night, my dear madam," said he, "good night, they are a glorious pair, a finer

specimen of humanity could not be selected. Depend upon it your son will get on well in London; you were right—he *will* be a good man, even *you* could not spoil him! Good night, good night."

When Mr. Vesper found himself in the street, he paused for an instant to recollect whether he ought to turn to the right or to the left, in order to regain the inn; and then choosing the wrong direction, he arrived speedily, owing to the rapid pace at which he walked, at the very extremity of the town on the hillward side. When just about to turn back, he spied on the opposite side of the deserted road, the very individuals who were at the moment the companions of his thoughts.

They stood under a little portico of rustic lattice-work covered with woodbine, and were in the act of bidding farewell. William held both the hands of his mistress locked in his, while she was speaking, apparently with earnestness, although her voice was inaudible to the unseen spy, who had ensconced himself in the shadow of a tree. When the motion of her lips was ended, her lover drew her gradually nearer, and clasped her unresisting to his breast; she dropped her head upon his shoulder, and they thus stood for some time like statues in the moonlight. She then raised her head, from which her bonnet had half fallen back, and her pale bright face shone for a moment upon his—their lips met—parted—the door opened—and Helen disappeared.

William stood for a moment rooted to the spot, and gazing at the closed door, but at length started, and withdrew, walking swiftly, not towards home, but in a direction leading to the hills.

"Ay, go, your way, young man," said Mr. Vesper, the tears starting to his eyes,—"go—go your way, with moonlight on your head, and love, hope, and heaven in your heart! Go, rove once more among the haunts of your visioned youth—go, gaze once more on the hill and the stream, and the

dell—go, worship yet once more on the high places of idolatrous memory! No moon so fair shall ever light your walks again—no scene so beautiful shall ever glad your pilgrim eyes; no thoughts so pure shall ever sweeten and consecrate your heart; no phantoms so glorious shall ever rise upon your waking dreams! Go, go, look, listen, feel, saturate your memory with the loveliness around and within you; it will one day be like a charm to preserve your soul unhurt amidst the contagion of the world!

When the enthusiastic traveller returned to his inn, the excitement had not yet abated in his mind. A thousand projects teemed in his brain, a thousand splendid phantasms crowded his imagination. He placed himself in the situation of a kind of earthly providence, watching over, if not directing the destinies of the interesting pair; he rubbed his hands with glee, while passing through the room: and as at last he leaped into bed with the lightness of eighteen, "Aha, my friend," said he addressing himself mentally to the Curate, "this is better than a game at backgammon!"

## CHAPTER III.

### *The First Move.*

At night was come into that hostelrie,
Well nine and twenty in a compagnie,
Of sundry folk, by aventure yfalle
In fellowship.

CHAUCER'S CANTERBURY TALES.

WHEN William Clive's journey, which he commenced on the following morning, began to draw near a close, his excited feelings grew more tumultuous every moment. The villages in the neighbourhood of London appeared as towns of respectable magnitude to him; and the idea of the vast leviathan to which those were but minnows, became proportionably expanded. Every step, at length, proclaimed more distinctly their approach to some enormous congregation of the human kind. The avenues opening to the main road became more frequent and more crowded—looking like innumerable ducts constructed for the purpose of draining the country of its population to convey it to one grand central reservoir.

Even the aspect of the passers by exhibited a sudden and remarkable change. Each man walked steadily on, absorbed in his own thoughts, or busy with his own occupation; he looked as if about to enter, or having just left, a tumultuous crowd, in which his only business was to elbow his way as well as possible. No vacant stare of curiosity greeted the approach of a new freight of human beings to swell the mass—the coach rolled on with as little observation as one of

an interminable succession of drops trickles down a cliff to lose itself in the ocean.

The sky behind was bright with the golden hues of an autumnal sunset, which shewed with nice precision the edge of the distant horizon, broken at intervals with small tapering spires. Before, embracing nearly two-thirds of the entire visible circle, a dull, dusky, motionless cloud sat brooding over the earth. The road along which the travellers were journeying seemed to plunge into the midst of this portentous gloom; but extending on either side, vast and irregular lines of buildings, as they caught the parting rays of the sun, flashed them back from their windows, looking like fragments of some victorious city in which the illuminations had begun. In a little while the eye was able to wander through opening vistas of streets, and to discern that the dim interior was formed of similar materials, while, spire after spire, and dome after dome, and column after column, rising slowly on the sight, conveyed to the spectator an almost exaggerated idea of magnitude and magnificence. At length, as one enormous dome stood distinctly revealed, apparently the centre and nucleus of the proud array; and when the sunlight flashed on that golden cross and ball, rendered as familiar by pictorial representations to the distant kind, as the roof of his father's cottage, William sprung upon his feet, where he sat on the top of the coach, and his high-wrought and tumultuous feelings of expectation, awe, wonder, and delight, burst forth in the exclamation—"London—London!"

As yet the wheels had not grated on the paved ways, which mutter, with portentous voice of the business of a town; but already a dull, grating, monotonous sound filled the air. It was like the low and soft, yet most mighty and magnificent voice which is heard upon the sea-shore at night, disturbing the ear, amidst the silence and calmness of the hour, with news from the far ocean. Soon a louder rush was heard, sweeping and dying away at intervals; then a single shout might be distinguished, rising among the millions of voices rather felt

than heard; and then slowly and gradually, as the ear of the rustic traveller learnt to apply its wonderful faculties to the new world of sound which it was entering, the supposed monotone divided into ten thousand component parts, and the roar of carriages, the working of machinery, the noise of innumerable trades, the barking of dogs, the voices of men, women, and children, in tones of cursing and blessing, and shrill laughter, deluged his very soul.

Darting suddenly from the road into one of the narrow avenues which gaped at every step, the paved stones at length rattled and grumbled and crushed beneath; rival vehicles swept headlong by, the wheels grazing as they passed; the air darkened, the sky was hidden; and with a momentary sensation of fear, our traveller saw the houses closing dimly around him, and felt that he was now fairly swallowed up and lost in the insatiable maw of the metropolis.

His inexperienced eye, however, exaggerated the darkness. The lamps in some places were only beginning to be lighted, and the citizens still walked on as if in broad day. In one shop a woman was matching the shade of a coloured stuff, which, for aught William's optics could discern, might have been either canvas or muslin; while in another, a solitary lamp, destined by and by to communicate light to the whole, threw a shadowy splendour upon the riches in the interior, which brought to his recollection the cave of Aladdin. In some places, the street was broken up beside him, and as the carriage tottered slowly past, he threw a gaze of wonder and almost terror into the excavation below, where at a vast deph numerous labourers were working by lamp-light, in what appeared to him to be the streets of a subterranean city. The coach stopped several times, and some of the passengers one by one dismounted; but William, having no motive for choosing one place rather than another, kept his seat, resolved to go as far as they would take him.

In the meantime the lamps became more bright, and the shop windows were lighted up; the streets were crowded

with innumerable carriages, and the foot-pavements with hurrying passengers; every thing wore an air of life and bustle, and prosperity, and the sensations of the traveller were wound up to a pitch of almost joyous excitement. Looking eagerly from one side to another—measuring with his eye some gigantic spire, till it was lost in the gloom above—now fixing a lingering gaze on some window of surpassing splendour, and now looking with no less surprise and delight on some lovely face turned up in the lamp-light to glance listlessly on the passing vehicle—he sat perfectly insensible of the lapse of time, till the coach plunged suddenly into an archway, and stopped before the door of an inn.

The area was crowded with similar vehicles; and porters staggering under baggage, waiters carrying lights, coachmen, guards and travellers all were seen passing and repassing, or crowding the door and hall of the general rendezvous. William, amused with the novel scene, remained staring around, till a man, touching his hat, recalled him to himself with the usual "Guard, if you please, sir!" and he found to his surprise that the horses had been removed, and that he was sitting alone on the empty and motionless coach.

Having removed his trunk to a bed-room in the inn, he descended to the coffee-room. Here there were no symptoms of the bustle outside. A few travellers dropped noiselessly in, or slipped as noiselessly out; some sat quietly reading the newspapers, smoking the while a cigar, or sipping brandy and water: others, already busy with their accounts, pored over the contents of their pocket-books; but all were absorbed in themselves, and appeared to be absolutely ignorant that the room contained another human being.

Tired of the selfish monotony of a scene which corresponded so ill with the present excited state of his feelings, William determined, as the hour was yet early, to indulge in a stroll along those streets which had appeared so delightful, when viewed from the coach; and by way of blending

the *utile* with the *dulce*, to find out, at the same time, if possible, an old country acquaintance, who, he had some hopes, would put him in the way of obtaining lodgings the the next day, and commencing the economy of his London life. The name of this acquaintance, was Burnet, and William remembered him a lad of much promise at Llanwellyn. Being left destitute at his father's death, he had repaired to the metropolis to try his fortune, where it was understood he had married. He was attached to some department of the law, but in what capacity or with what success, was not known.

It so happened that the quarter indicated by Burnet's address, was in the immediate neighbourhood of the inn; and William had scarcely time to accustom his eyes to the glare and glitter of the shops, and his ears to the thousand incongruous noises of evening, when on looking up accidentally, he read the name of the street on the corner. The houses looked respectable and spacious, although in reality they boasted no more than two apartments on the floor, and he felt an unselfish gladness in thinking that his friend must have done well in the world. On arriving at the proper number, he knocked, and the door was opened by a respectable looking female, with one child at her breast, and two or three at her heels. His information was correct—Mr. Burnet did live there.

"Is he at home?" enquired William.

"Higher up," replied the woman, retreating into the parlour, and leaving the stranger in darkness. Surprised and indignant at the rudeness, he groped his way to the staircase, and succeeded in reaching the first floor. While searching for the handle of the door, the noise he made attracted the attention of the inmates, and a young lady came out to enquire his pleasure. Through the half-open door, he could perceive that the room was well sized, and handsomely furnished, and the lady herself evidently belonged to the genteeler classes of society.

"Mr. Burnet?" she replied, thoughtfully—"Mamma, do you know any thing of a Mr. Burnet?"

"No, my dear."

"Do you, papa?"

"No, no—nonsense. Stay, higher up, I believe—yes, higher up." The young lady shut the door: William, left again in darkness, climbed another flight, and knocked.

"Come in," cried a voice. He entered, and found, in a decent, respectable-looking apartment, two men in the garb of quakers, with their broad-brimmed hats on, reading newspapers by the fireside, with a large pewter flaggon on the table beside them. One of them, after finishing deliberately the sentence he had been perusing, turned round his head, and William repeated the question.

"I know not, friend," was the reply—"higher up, perhaps, higher up;" and the quaker resumed his reading. The other did not so much as raise his eyes from the paper; and William, therefore, withdrew, signifying his disapprobation of their inhospitality by shutting the door after him with less gentleness than usual. Higher up, however, our adventurer groped, and on arriving at the third floor, was happy to find it the last. Being invited, as before, to open the door for himself and walk in, he did so, and found the apartment meagerly supplied with mean furniture, among which was a tent bed; a young man sat by a table, on which some books and papers were scattered; a few anatomical preparations lay about the room, and a coffee-pot beside the fire proclaimed the suitable sobriety of the student's habits.

"Mr. Burnet?" said he, "I don't know, indeed—you had better inquire further."

"Upon my soul, I am much obliged to you," replied William, hastily, who was now out of all patience—"but I would rather be excused just now from scrambling upon the slates,

unless you, in the first place, will shew me the way." The student smiled.

"There is no need," said he; "there is a family next door, I believe; and if 'one Burnet' does not hang out there, why I would recommend you just to descend quietly by the stairs as you came;" and, so saying, the young man resumed his studies.

William accordingly tried the next door, and, at length, found his friend.

He had some difficulty, at first, in recognising the features so familiar in his early youth; but the instant he became convinced that Burnet stood really before him in life and limb, he ran up to him with all the kindly enthusiasm of a young man unhackneyed in the ways of the world, and shook him vehemently by the hand. His old companion neither shrunk from the gripe, nor returned it; he replied in the usual manner to the usual questions, but asked none in return; and when the first brief salutations were over, stood silent for a moment, as if expecting either that William would withdraw, or mention the purport of his visit. At length, appearing to recollect himself, he selected one of a few broken chairs with which the room was garnished, and, with a forced heartiness of manner, invited him to sit down.

William hesitated at first, but the scene around seemed to explain the apparent coldness of Burnet. A floor without a carpet, a bed without curtains, and a grate almost destitute of fire—although a cooking utensil disputed with the family the little heat it afforded—appeared to indicate the very extreme of poverty. Three children were at supper, and it seemed scarcely possible that the young creature who ministered to their wants, could be the mother of such a family. She appeared to be quite a girl; and even the haggard and care-worn expression of her features could not conceal that they had been, very lately, both handsome and agreeable. Her dress, however, was neglected, and even dirty; and her

sickly bosom, where an infant lay feeding, was exposed with an unconscious impropriety, which awakened, at once, pity and disgust. Occupied incessantly with her domestic cares, she hardly looked at the stranger; her curiosity received no excitement from matters that were out of her department; and the only tokens she exhibited of being even aware of his presence, were a slap and a "hush!" to such of her little charges as merited the reproof, by allowing any other sound to escape the lips than that required in the process of mastication.

A discipline unusual, and, therefore, apparently unreasonable, produced the effect that might have been anticipated. The children, silent at first in surprise, were loud at length in remonstrance, and a sound arose from among them, in which the shrill scream, the sturdy roar, and the plaintive whine were blended together like voices in some musical composition—certainly not a glee. Poor Burnet sat like the image either of patience or despair. He raised his voice, for some time, so as to be heard above the din; but wearied at last with the hopeless struggle, held his tongue. In a momentary pause he sighed; but while he did so, no deeper depression than usual appeared in his manner, and no bitterer reflections on his fate seemed to be passing through his mind his sigh was without character or expression, and seemed more the effect of habit than a token of sorrow or regret.

"You have not introduced me to Mrs. Burnet," said William at length, so much shocked and embarrassed by the scene before him, that he hardly knew what to say.

"That is to my wife," replied the husband. Mrs. Burnet sighed.

"I remember, Clive," continued Burnet suddenly, while a kind of smile played on his dejected features, "I remember when you and I were younger than we are now—when we used to walk out on a still evening, or a moon-light night, along the hawthorn hedges leading to the heights of Llan-

wellyn—there was a cottage, a little mud-walled, straw-thatched, ruined hovel, near the bottom of the hill. Poor fellow! said I once when we were speaking of its new tenant—what a comfortless place to live in, what a wretched fireside to go back to from his hard day's work! 'Say rather happy fellow,' returned you, 'he has married the girl of his heart, and he has a whole world to himself in that enchanted cottage. You will find what he will make of it; he will trim the garden and re-thatch the roof, and I will help him myself to train honeysuckle round the walls. In another summer or two, when you see a little chubby-face looking out of the casement, which by that time will be encircled with leaves, you will own it to be a very paradise of love and content. And so you did, help him, and you both worked very hard—but it would not do. Chubby-faces came fast enough, but the cottage grew worse and worse; and at last when there were more mouths to eat than bread to fill them, the man died, the wife and children went to the workhouse, and the hut fell into ruins; on which I am told, younger boys than you and I were then, throw looks of superstitious dread as they circle widely on their way home from a ramble on the hill." Burnet was silent for a moment, and then went on—"It is singular enough," said he, "that I cannot get that cottage out of my head. I, too, married for love—" and he cast an unimpassioned glance on the young wife, who returned it with one of pity and regret. "I brought my wife home to my London hut, and looked forward like you, to the time when I should be able to trim it a little—but you see how it is; things get worse instead of better; the furniture grows old and scanty, and the family large; and although I work harder, I am paid less. A fit of illness would wind up the affair in a week's time."

"But, good heavens, Burnet," exclaimed our adventurer, both surprised and shocked, "is it not irrational—I must say, unmanly, in a young and well-educated man like you to talk in this manner? The law is a profession which gives the widest scope for talents and industry of all kinds; and were it

otherwise, there are surely more ways of living than one to be met with in London."

"For me," replied Burnet, calmly, "there is only one: I was for some time the drudge rather than the clerk of an attorney, and leaving my situation on account of a quarrel with my employer was unable to find another. I was too poor for a merchant's counting-house, where the salary of one so useless and inexperienced would not have sufficed to keep me alive; I was too proud to stand behind a counter or a coach; and I was too weak in body—perhaps also in mind—to become a hewer of wood and a drawer of water to my fellow-men. Of all the qualifications requisite for a man who must live by the wants of his neighbours, I possessed only one—I could write."

"Then you do not still belong to the profession of the law?" interrupted William.

"Yes: just as this pen belongs to the profession of literature. I am one of the humble machines whose task it is to copy papers, the production of other men's brains; in short, I am what is technically called a *law writer*. Thanks to the *verbosity* of the documents I allude to—the natural characteristic of a state of society in the highest degree refined and artificial—I am still able to supply my family with bread. This however, becomes more difficult every day. The same evil ingenuity which forces the honest, or the suspicious, or the ingenious in their own way, to entrench themselves against all things possible and impossible, behind an infinity of terms and modes of expression, leads them to inventions which diminish the expense of so cumbrous a machinery. The numerous copies for instance of a paper which some time ago would have cost a round sum to the litigants, and provided many families of law writers with a meal, may now be struck off for a trifle by means of lithography. The progress of the schoolmaster too, who flogs so many aspiring youths into an ambition to wear long coats and to be called *Mister*,

raises claims for our morsel of bread which before would have been satisfied at the plough-tail; and in army and navy officers who have learnt to write since the war, and even in that fairer portion of the human family, which condescended formerly to no more unfeminine employments, than brush-making, boot-closing, and mop-spinning, we find a host of dangerous and greedy rivals. I do not complain, however; I have no one to find fault with—all these things are naturally and necessarily born of the time; and the witling who sneers at the the redundance of our legal language, and the ass who kicks against the advance of knowledge among the "common people," appear to me to be equally ridiculous. Burnet had talked himself into complacency, if not animation; and William, inexperienced as he was in the study of character, was not slow in perceiving that the dejection so apparent in his manner at first was the effect, not of grief and disappointment, but simply of a mechanical and monotonous employment, the returns of which were too small, and the leisure hours too few, to permit the labourer to seek amusement for his naturally restless mind in other pursuits. The sympathy of the observer was decreased by this discovery: he had yet to learn that in Burnet the disease exhibited itself in its mildest form, and he would probably still have joined in the exclamation of many good and sensible people on witnessing some moral fall—Poor creature! what could have led him into vice?—his employment was so regular, so quiet, so easy, that not even a thought was required in its prosecution.

"Come come," exclaimed Burnet, when his lecture was finished, "we live, after all. I'll shut up my papers for the night, and in spite of the world, we'll drink a cheerful glass to old friends, and old times." He seized his hat, and went out of the room as he spoke, and William following him mechanically down stairs, was glad to think that his friend possessed an apartment for the reception of visitors in what

seemed to be a genteeler part of the house. Burnet however strode through the hall, and emerged into the street, where the noise and crowd prevented William for some time from asking the question to which he was tempted by such singular conduct.

"This way!" cried the former, taking hold of his friend's arm, and dragging him suddenly into a narrow passage opening apparently into some house. On the right hand a still narrower door admitted a motley crowd of the lowest order into a compartment furnished with a counter of polished pewter; across which glasses of all dimensions, and filled with liquids of all colours, were handed incessantly to the claimants. William paused for a moment in curiosity, for he perceived that he had entered for the first time one of those peculiarly Metropolitan rendezvous which are neither taverns nor coffee-houses, but are known by the still more appropriate name of *public-houses*. Burnet, however, shouted to him from the further end of the passage; and, following the voice, he found himself the next moment in an apartment, the atmosphere of which was so loaded with tobacco smoke, that for some time he could neither see nor breathe freely.

"You are surprised," said his conductor, as they seated themselves at a table nearly filled with company—"You manage these things differently in the country. This is my parlour!" (slapping the table with a violence that made the guests start and look at him, although only for an instant) "this is my reception-room, open to me and my friends from morning till night; neither wife nor children may follow me to a haunt sacred to the dignity of man: here I am at my ease; my fire is cheerful, and my servants attentive; and I will shew you that my cellar can boast a cup of ale, as good as ever was brewed in Wiltshire." William, during this speech sat in awkward and fidgetty silence, his cheeks burning with a blush, half of shame half of anger, as he felt the attention of the company so obtrusively and unnecessarily drawn upon him; but the next moment, to his great relief,

he heard the interrupted conversation around return to its former channels. Some individuals, indeed, who sat smoking their pipes with as solitary an air as if they had been in a desert, testified their approbation of the speaker's eloquence by drinking his health; but even they very speedily returned into the philosophic abstraction characteristic of their class, and the two friends surrounded by gingling glasses and talkative guests, found themselves to all intents and purposes alone.

"Is this the custom," inquired William, with some hesitation, "among the rich and respectable classes of society?"

"As you know nothing of the composition of London society," replied Burnet, "you can only mean, among the gentry, or among such, at all events, as make some pretensions to gentility. Certainly not. In the country, when a thriving shopkeeper has retired for the day from his counter, he enters the harem as good a gentleman as any lord in the land. He receives his friends at home; his wife gives tea-parties, and his daughters play to the company on the piano. Individuals of this class are termed, somewhat indefinitely, 'people in business,' a cognomen, however, which by no means includes the wholesale merchants. In town, the shopkeepers are simply 'tradesmen,' and even those who may be said to form the aristocracy of the body, are not ashamed of the title. This class of society, which comprehends a vast portion of the wealth of the metropolis, live in the public-houses; their shops being their stalls of business, and their houses their dormitories. They are fond of the public-house from habit and early association, but still more from a knowledge of its convenience. There is no commodity in London so dear, or so merchantable, as house-room; and thus their dwellings are in many instances crammed with lodgers from top to bottom, to the utter exclusion of guests: but even when this is not the case, they know that it is here only they can meet with their associates. As for that crowd of nondescripts who are neither tradesmen nor mechanics, nor gentlemen,

but who, wearing a good coat upon their back, pass by the courtesy of society, for *misters*, while they live no human being knows where—Perhaps," (added Burnet, with a dejected smile,) "in a three-pair back-room, with a breeding wife and three squalling children—what would become of them if no such place as the public-house existed? They would be obliged to descend and talk to their visitors in the streets, or to unveil to the unhallowed eyes of a stranger, the most sacred mysteries of their domestic life. As it is, a man's house is literally his castle; and almost as impregnable as if it were a castle in the air; no one insults another, whatever may be his apparent circumstances, with the question 'where do you live?' it would be resented, in most instances, as fiercely as the still less answerable one of 'how do you live?' The same custom prevails among the nondescripts, who have *not* a good coat on their backs, although a different and somewhat cheaper room is provided for their reception; and among the mechanics also, who style themselves the 'useful classes', conceiving with infinite wisdom, that they are more useful to their neighbour by giving him a pair of boots, than he is to them by giving them the money to buy bread. With regard to the upper ranks, including the aristocracy of trade, they live as people always do who have plenty of room: but even they are making a rapid approximation to the manners of the lower classes; their clubs, I am told, being constructed on the same principle as a society of tailors and one of shopmen which meet in this very house; with the sole difference that among the vulgar, a fund, or posthumous 'benefit' is subscribed, and thus they may be said to eat and drink for the good of their surviving families." When Burnet had reached this point in his narration, a little elderly man, wearing a shabby brown frock, and curiously dirty linen, entered the room. He was received by the company with sundry salutations, in various degrees of familiarity, from, "How are you to night, Mr. Wilkins?" down to "Ha, old boy, how dost?" To all of which he replied with scrupulous politeness. By the time this ceremony of reception was over, his quick grey eye had fastened for an instant upon every face in the room;

and at length, fixing upon that of our hero, it "held him" as securely as the wedding guest, when taken into custody by the ancient glance of the mariner. Mr. Wilkins then rejecting the proffer of a seat made in two or three quarters at once, glided up to where William sat, and addressed him in a sort of confidential whisper.

"Fine seasonable weather, sir," said he, "the country looks as if it did not know that the winter is just at hand. Been lately in Wales?"

"Why, yes," replied William, drawing mechanically back as a thousand stories of the peril which the hapless stranger in London is doomed to undergo, flashed upon his recollection.

"Knew it," said Wilkins." "Have you seen the new plough—or the patent harrow? I could show you an assortment at a friend's warehouse that would astonish you."

"I am not an agriculturist," replied William, resolutely.

"I dare say not; you look like one who would care less to sow a corn-field than to trample one down, running after a covey of partridges. Talking of partridges, I know a gentleman who might be induced to part with a beautiful little setter, on reasonable terms." William shook his head.

"A friend of mine, has a fowling piece for sale at a mere nothing; I could get it turned into a detonator for a few shillings." William buttoned up his trowser's pocket.

"I'll tell you what, sir," said the persevering stranger, "these cravats require to be bought by a person who knows what he is about. You flatter yourself, I suppose, that you are wearing silk! Now an acquaintance of mine in the city could be prevailed upon to dispose of a dozen, or any smaller or larger number of a quality that would make you wonder at the price. As for waistcoating," drawing a parcel from his pocket, "a friend of mine has just put into my hands an article which I can absolutely vouch for," and he spread out upon the table a few yards of figured silk. Many of the

company gathered round this miscellaneous dealer, to look at his wares, and William's awkwardness returned, as he found himself placed in so conspicuous a situation.

"I take it upon myself," at length, said a very gentleman-like person, who appeared to be on tolerable good terms with himself—"I take it upon myself to say, that there is more worsted than silk in this article." Some of the company appeared disposed to join him, while others strenuously rebutted the imputation, and Wilkins, now appealing to one party and now angrily arguing with the other, forgot entirely the customer he had been so anxious to secure. In the meantime the waistcoat piece was handed from one to another, and presently the tumult rolled to the farther end of the room.

Burnet appeared to be amused with the look, half of alarm, half of curiosity, which the novice turned upon him.

"You need not be afraid," said he, "they will not eat you alive, for all you are a country cousin. Wilkins, strange as you may think it, will sell you any thing you can imagine quite as cheap as you could buy it at the shops."

"And this out of mere benevolence?"

"Not exactly. Competition runs so high in these last days, that methods of obtaining custom are resorted to, which our ancestors never dreamed of. A man would formerly recommend his wine or coal merchant to a friend, without thinking of receiving ten per cent. from the trader for his trouble.—Now we have changed all that; every thing is marketable, down to our very conversation. As for Wilkins, he has carried the business to the pitch of caricature; he is in the most general sense a general agent; but where he lives, or how he lives, no living man knows; he is a shrewd, clever fellow, and with all goodnatured; but one of these unfortunate devils, with whom nothing prospers—a very Tantalus, who would choke with thirst, even if up to the neck in water."

"And the gentleman who opened the debate about the qual-

ity of the stuff! He seems to me to be absolutely an anomaly in the company.—His top-boots, furred cloak, and frizzled hair have surely lost their way."

"He is a shopman in the city, a denizen of the vast establishment of Messrs. Dot and Co. Why do you stare? He is really a well-looking fellow, and, for aught I know, a gentleman's son. Some young men have less spirit than you or I; or, which is the same thing, more philosophy. His parents, no doubt, taught him to write; but we all write, every one of us. He, as it happened, was one of the many who could find no employment for this universal qualification: and he had probably the sense to set himself to learn a business, easy in itself, and little embarrassing either to mind or body. He is somewhat of a puppy, it is true, but this is the fault of circumstances. Accustomed from morning to night to handle, and to talk and think of articles of dress, and to be stared and simpered at by the women, it would be a wonder if some effeminacy of mind and some puppyism of person were not the result. One business makes a sloven, another a dandy; and the latter is less ridiculous and more amiable than the former." At this moment Burnet's full glass vanished from the table, and the friends looking up, saw its contents poured into a capacious mouth behind them, somewhat in the manner of the Hindoos, who fling their drink into their throats without touching the vessel with their lips. Having satisfactorily performed this feat, a man who was by far the shabbiest of the company, nodded with a comic familiarity to Burnet, and moved towards the door.

"Put me in mind, Dick," said he, "to stand the next time," and he disappeared into the passage. Burnet did not seem to be in the least disconcerted by the laugh which arose from the company at his expense.

"He will be as good as his word," said he; "ay, and better; if Wigwam was not so intolerable an ass, he would be a fine fellow.—You look, William," he continued, "as if you were disgusted by the dissipated, desperate air, and poverty-

stricken garb of this unceremonious acquaintance; Wigwam, nevertheless, is a man of some talent, and great good nature; and he is, moreover, and I am sure the announcement will awaken *your* respect, a "gentleman of the press.'"

"Are you serious?"

"He came to town a fine, frank, high-minded young fellow, as sober as a hermit, and as devout as a martyr. Literature was the profession he adopted, but whether he had even a chance of success I never could learn. It was his fortune to meet soon after his arrival with a young girl, like himself an adventurer from the country, whose qualifications for making a fortune lay also in her head and fingers, for she could both devise and execute a bonnet or a pelisse. Wigwam, as simple and innocent as herself, and possessed withal by a gallant and adventurous spirit, paid his addresses—probably to the tune of the old ballad:

> "A heart as soft, a heart as kind,
> A heart as sound and free,
> As in the whole world thou canst find—
> That heart I'll give to thee!'

His offer was accepted—they were married—" Burnet stopped suddenly, and shoved back his chair.

"And what became of them?—what became of *her*?" inquired William, with interest.

"As to her, I do not know," answered his friend coldly, "you see what has become of him!"

"Does he still live by literature?"

"He is a reporter for the newspapers, of that class which is paid three half-pence a line for their paragraphs."

"Three half-pence a *line!* that seems a magnificent sum to me."

"It is a sum on which a man might live with tolerable com-

fort, were it not for the trifling circumstances of the editor having it in his power either to cut down or reject altogether. This renders the profession—for it is a distinct and crowded profession—one of the most precarious imaginable: and as the poor devils, in order to give themselves a chance of making as many three half-pences as possible, are in the habit of spinning out their sentences and distending their details beyond all reasonable rule, they have fallen into obloquy and contempt." Burnet became graver and more sullen every moment. Some unconscious analogy between his own circumstances and those of Wigwam's family seemed to be weighing down his spirits. "Come, come," said he, at length, starting up—"I have no more lions for you to-night. These people are all decent tradesmen, fat and greasy citizens; I will walk with you to the bottom of the street and put you in the road to your inn. Good night gentlemen."

"Good night, good night."

## CHAPTER IV.

*In which the elbow is exercised to little purpose.*

As are those apples, pleasant to the eye,
But full of smoke within, which use to grow
Near the dead lake.

DRUMMOND.

THE excitement of William's feelings had not abated when he parted with his friend, but its character was changed.—There was nothing in common, he knew, between himself and the persons who had just been described to him, but there certainly seemed to be a marvellous similarity in the circumstances in which their course of adventure had commenced. An uneasy sensation arose in his bosom; a sort of qualm run across his heart, and he stopped suddenly in the street, and threw a bewildered glance among the dark forest of houses by which he was surrounded. The night air was cold and yet heavy; it seemed as if he could not breathe freely; he felt that he had no chance of sleeping very soon, and he determined therefore to try the effect of a walk before betaking himself to bed.

And onward he did walk, he knew not, and cared not in what direction, and so deeply immersed in speculation as to be utterly unconscious of the lapse of time. The streets were gradually deserted; the lights disappeared from the windows; and at length one o'clock pealing from a distant church startled him to recollection. The solemn sound seemed to awaken a thousand echoes, for it was repeated in various tones, and at various distances, for a considerable time; and mingling with

them, some hoarse human murmurs were heard, which his ear was at length enabled to separate into their component words, "past one!" By and bye the bells and voices died gradually away, and all was silent as before.

William was by this time, although, he did not then know the locality, in Piccadilly, beside the Green Park. He observed on the opposite side of the street a man leaning on the rails, and apparently looking attentively at the jet d'eau which plays in the pond; and taking this person for a watchman, he crossed over to ask him the way to his inn. The man did not at once reply to his question, but, on its being repeated in a louder tone, jumped suddenly round, and rubbing his eyes—

"Od so!" said he, "I declare I was almost asleep. Hang that drowsy water; I always hated the liquid as if it had been poison. But how—is it you? My dear fellow, I am glad to see you!" shaking him heartily by the hand, "How have you been? What are you up to, eh? So, you have left our friend Dick at his muddy ale.—Have you quarrelled with your landlady?" William had by this time identified the stranger with poor Wigwam, whose story had so much interested him a few hours before, and forgetting, or uncaring, that not even the ceremony of introduction had passed between them, returned the grasp as cordially as it was given.

"Come, what are you up to?" repeated the reporter.

"I was just about to ask you to point out the nearest way into Holborn: I have wandered from the inn where I arrived this evening; and it is now full time to think of bed."—Wigwam turned a look of comic incredulity upon his companion; but the expression vanished at the first glimpse of the clear eye and open brow of our adventurer. He hesitated for a moment, and turned away his head; but rallying suddenly, he cocked his weather-beaten hat, and hemming away his confusion—

"Come along, then," cried he; "step out my fine fellow—you could not have met with a better pilot in England."

"Not for the world," exclaimed William, "I would not take you a yard out of your way at an hour like this—much less a distance that appears to me to be several miles." Wigwam turned suddenly round, and looked him full in the face.

"I thought I had told you," said he, "that I had quarrelled with my landlady. Sink me it has been the lot of many a good fellow before now! But never mind, there is a moon above, although obscured by these sulky-looking clouds; and for me there is—corn in Egypt, my boy, corn in Egypt still. Come along!" and he strode rapidly away.

William read the meaning of his companion's metaphor, in his features, air, manner and dress; and with a feeling of commiseration mingled with horror, followed him in silence, thro' the gloom. Can this be London, thought he, the queen of cities, the wealthy, the generous? or are these so many omens sent from heaven to warn me of the ruin into which I am about to plunge? Resolving, at all events, that the misery he could not remove he would at least relieve for the moment, he asked Wigwam whether he knew of any house of public reception, where they could both be accommodated for the remainder of the night. The inn was out of the question—so vagabond a figure as that presented by the reporter, would not be admitted.

"Where we can *both* be accommodated?" repeated the latter. "To be sure I do, my dear fellow—a dozen, if that were necessary; only put me in mind that I stand the next time. I will take you to a house much nearer than the inn, where you will see what London is made of. I knew there was corn in Egypt," continued he, half aloud, and rubbing his hands, as he quickened his pace almost to a run—"I said there was corn in Egypt!"

"But, sir," said William, catching hold his arm, "I do not wish just at this time, to inquire into the materials of London society; my object is to get to bed as speedily as possible."

"At your option, lad, at your option," replied the reporter,

"but I like the fireside as well, sometimes. There will be only a few of us, owing to the great fight at Epping, quite a family party, I assure you." Musing on what connexion could possibly subsist between the great fight at Epping and the family party they were about to join, our adventurer followed his guide in silence, and in due time they stopped before a house in James's Street, Covent Garden.

Wigwam tapped, apparently in a peculiar manner, and after some difficulty the wanderers were admitted. The apartment into which they were received was divided like a coffee-room; and with its bare wooden benches, stained walls, and dirty floor, strewed with sawdust, looked as if it was intended only for the very lowest classes of society. The company, at first sight, seemed to be as much out of their sphere as the shopman at the Three Puncheons. It consisted of fifteen or twenty men, for the most part genteelly dressed, and nearly the same number of women, in silks and satins, and a few in downright ball costume. The most fashionable freedom prevailed. The jest went round—not delicate, it is true, but sufficiently pointed; and this was followed by the stroke of manual humour; while the whole received a certain poignancy from the frequent oath and imprecation with which the speech of both sexes was garnished. Here and there a stranger might be observed, apparently from the country, glaring with drunken curiosity upon the unaccustomed scene, evincing a sense of his danger by surly defiance, or affecting to brave it by impertinent intrusion:—these were the men, no doubt, destined to raise up their aching, empty heads and great calf's eyes to Sir Richard Birnie in the morning, complaining of evils to which their own stupidity had exposed them, and imploring redress for injuries which their own imprudence had provoked. As for Wigwam, he made himself perfectly at home in a moment, shook hands with the men, rallied or tickled the women, sipped every body's coffee—for "the sober berry's juice" was the refreshment at least in this apartment—and seemed to be a prodigious favourite with the whole company. William gazed at first in amused surprise, which was gradually suc-

ceeded by disgust and aversion; and at length slipping a piece of money into Wigwam's hand, he made his retreat. The reporter pocketed the gift with great complacency; but as our adventurer vanished into the lobby, he bawled after him—

"Hollo, Bill, be sure you put me in mind that I stand the next time!"

It was late before William awoke the next day, and while running over in his memory the scenes and characters of the previous night, he dressed in haste and almost trepidation. A few hours, he felt, would virtually decide his prospects; he would be able to perceive even by the manner of the new friends he was to court, what interest they were disposed to take in his affairs, and what benefit he was likely to reap from their good offices. Of his two letters of introduction, the one addressed to Mr. Irvine, the East India merchant, seemed the most important; and he therefore enquired his way to the Royal Exchange, near which was situated the counting-house of his expected patron.

He mounted the steps with a beating heart. Mr. Irvine was within; the visitor's name? William Clive. In another minute, the clerk returned to ask his business: he gave him the letter of introduction, and was speedily ushered into the inner counting-room. Mr. Irvine, a handsome, middle-aged, gentlemanlike man, received him politely—asked a few questions—was sorry he had no vacancy at present—did not know of any elsewhere, and seldom heard of such things—would keep the affair in mind, however—was in the habit himself of applying to a situation-agent when he wanted an assistant—his clerk would give him the person's address—wished him a very good morning—and would be delighted to hear of his success.

"Little time lost, however!" said William, bitterly, as he descended into the street—"This is the true way of doing business! So—h! here is one anchor gone; God help me when I shall be entirely adrift on this boisterous sea, with no

dependence but on my own smooth water-sails, and fair weather skill!"—He resolved, notwithstanding, call upon the agent mentioned by Mr. Irvine, although, it must be confessed, with little hope of deriving any benefit from his assistance. He found him in a court near Lombard street, in a little counting-room at the top of the house. He was a grave, elderly, respectable looking person, and a huge book lay open before him. The agent desired to know his qualifications.

"I know a little Greek—and Latin—and French—and Italian. I learnt book-keeping at school—and I have been considered to write a good hand."

"Shall I enter your name, and address, and qualifications, and references?"

"If you please."

"The fee is half-a-guinea." William reddened, and thrust his hand hastily into his pocket. He drew the coin half way out from among its few—few companions; but his heart failed him, and he allowed it to drop again to the bottom.

"I would prefer, sir," said he, "paying you double or treble the money when I obtain a situation, and even allowing you a reasonable per centage on the salary."

"That is contrary to my way of doing business," said the agent, calmly.

"Then, at least, tell me, if it be in your power, what are my prospects of success, supposing I enter my name in your books."

"Certainly; I wish to mislead nobody. The qualifications you have mentioned are almost wholly useless—some of them worse than useless; and the fate of your application, therefore, will depend upon the respectability and friendship of the parties to whom you mean to refer."

"It is enough; I will not trouble you; good morning." He

hurried down the stairs, and strode, in a kind of desperation, to a house in the regions of Finsbury, which was pointed out to him as the residence of the Blanks. Here he was ushered into a room where several ladies were at lunch, eating soup; and he was hardly permitted to deliver his letter till he had joined them in the amusement. Genealogies were then settled, and family likenesses detected; and, at length, he secretly congratulated himself on the safe establishment of the fact, that he had really some of the rich blood of the Blanks, however diluted and adulterated, in his veins. They then treated of his business in town, and declared themselves highly interested in his inquiries, and absolutely certain of their successful termination.

"Your son-in-law, ma'am," hinted William, "I have heard is in extensive business, and of course employs a suitable number of clerks?"

"He is one of the greatest merchants in the city," said Mrs. Blank; "but as to his clerks, we do not meddle with these things at all; indeed we have declined it on several occasions: however, we dine at five precisely, and shall be most happy to see you any and every day you like." William looked grave.

"But you have many other friends, no doubt, equally capable of assisting me in my views, and to whom a word from you would be a command."

"Oh, no, you are quite mistaken, we have no influence now in the world; indeed, we never lay ourselves out for these things."

"But you will be sure to come to dinner," added one of the daughters.

"Yes, do," said the other, "take apartments in the neighbourhood; it will be so convenient just to pop in at five, and we are always happy to see any body at dinner!" William, with a burning cheek and a labouring bosom, took his leave;

and was again in the midst of the crowded part of the city, before awakening to a distinct recollection of the circumstances of his situation. He was now upon his own resources. Of what did they consist? and in what way were they to be employed? A thousand puzzling questions suggested themselves to his mind, and at length he stood stock still in the middle of the footway, and looked about like one who had lost his way.

Indecision, however, of this kind, will not do in London; the next passer by elbowed him out of his way, and a woman, into whose path he was thus thrown, swore at him like a trooper. This feminine creature was one of the girls employed by the newsmen, and a bundle of papers she carried under her arm suggested an idea at which he grasped with eagerness. He purchased from her a journal celebrated for the number of its advertisements—being as yet ignorant that a man who is not particularly nice might for less than one-fourth part of that sum read the paper all through, and obtain some refreshment and a comfortable seat into the bargain—and posting himself up against the wall, opened the important page. The very first advertisement which caught his eye made his heart beat and his eyes sparkle.—

"Wanted immediately, a gentleman under thirty, to undertake a situation of high respectability, and considerable emolument. References required. Apply to R. W. No. 90, Westley Street, Borough." He crushed the newspaper into his pocket, inquired the way to the Borough, and sprung impetuously forward to the adventure.

Crossing London Bridge, he saw the Thames for the first time. Its broad bosom, studded with innumerable barges, glittered in the sun-light; here and there amidst the crowd of canoe-like skiffs, a silken pennon, or a painted canopy, or a gilded prow, marked the path of wealth or civic honour; all was mirth and motion; the shrill laugh of ladies leaped along the water, and, mingled with sounds of the bugle or the flute; barges passed and repassed; the river tumbled along in music and in joy, and every component atom of its surface seemed

to move and quiver in the sun. William's heart, too, danced at the sights and sounds; he seemed to acquire fresh vigour from the breeze which blew over the water, and fresh hope from the gladsome scene around. He pushed gallantly forward, and at length dived, on the southern side of the river, into a new wilderness of houses which rose from the water's edge.

It was a considerable time before he could find the place indicated in the advertisement, and his dread of being too late increased every moment. At length the fortunate words "Westley Street" appeared on the corner of a house, and he ran forward with renewed celerity. He was in hopes that the mean appearance of the buildings would dissappear, as he had sometimes found it to do, on advancing into the street; but here the very reverse was the case: and at length, when he found himself in a dirty, narrow lane, surrounded by all the usual indications of wretchedness and vice which distinguish the abodes of the congregated poor in cities, he became convinced that he had mistaken his way, and bitterly regretted the time he had lost in exploring so worthless a channel. On arriving, however, at the required number, he had the curiosity to look in at the open door.

The only furniture which graced the apartment, that seemed to have been transported from an Irish bog, was a fragment of a counting-house desk, the rents in which were here and there concealed from prying eyes by patches of brown paper; and behind it, a stool, minus the third leg. That the latter article was able to maintain so handsomely as it did its position on only two legs, was owing to an individual, the solitary denizen of the room, who poised himself upon it so ingeniously, that an unobservant spectator would have imagined the feat had been performed for the sitter's own convenience or recreation, while he hung over the pages of a huge mercantile looking book before him. William was staggered by this appearance of business; and drawing forth the newspaper, compared the number again with that on the door. The man

still did not look up, and our adventurer, at length somewhat abruptly asked—

"Pray, sir, are you R. W.?"

"Thirty-two—forty-one—fifty-five—fifty-eight," muttered the accountant, running up the money column, with his eye and pen, "I shall attend to you in a moment, sir." William, after waiting two or three moments, threw another glance round the apartment, and, indignant at having been seduced into hope by so very shabby a concern, repeated his question with an emphasis he did not use on ordinary occasions:

"I say, sir, are you R. W.?"—upon which the accountant, placing his finger upon the figure at which he had been interrupted, raised his head slowly to examine the face of his customer; and to the great astonishment of our adventurer, disclosed the features of the universal agent, Mr. Wilkins. The advertiser stared at his client with unmoved gravity, and then bowing solemnly, saluted him by his name.

"Allow me to place a chair for you, good sir. Never mind, they are all up stairs. By the way, it is no bad idea, that walking cane which unfolds into a seat—the thing may be useful sometimes. The original inventor is a friend of mine, and I could get one for you at prime cost."

"That is not the question now, Mr. Wilkins," said William, half provoked, and half amused—"I have wandered here in search of R. W. and I am desirous of inquiring into the nature of the situation he advertises."

"The situation," said Mr. Wilkins, "is a very good one—a very good one, indeed. Our custom is, for the applicant to deposit a trifle—only a shilling—merely for the trouble of booking; and thus, being in possession of his name, address, qualifications, and references, if he happens to be the successful candidate, we can, in due time, let him know all about it, you know." William could not help smiling in the midst of his vexation.

"Come then," said he, "admit me as a candidate—there is your shilling."

"Not from a friend!" exclaimed the agent—"never from a friend! No, no, my dear sir, if you were a stranger it would be another matter. Well, if it must be so—this is really uncivil—never mind, we'll go over the way, and I'll treat you to a pint of ale." William, with difficulty, excused himself from accepting this liberal offer; but Mr. Wilkins would, at least, see him to the door.

"Adieu!" said he, shaking him by the hand—"if we succeed, you may depend upon hearing from me."

"After all, Mr. Wilkins," remarked William, taking a last peep at the *office*, "do you think this is exactly the place for—for—"

"Oh, you don't like the situation? Central, I think, rather central—but you don't know town yet."

"I do not altogether mean geographically—but the appearance—the appointments—the—"

"You think it looks a little queer!—a little rum-looking! I dare say you do; but that's not much matter. We don't ask half-a-guinea, like some folks—what can you expect for a shilling?"

"That is just the point. We expect, I think, as much for one shilling as for twenty; we expect probability."

"*Probability!* Pardon me my dear sir, you quite amuse me. Go to the lottery, and count probabilities—go to the gaming-table, and calculate chances—go to a common public house raffle, and study philosophy! He whose merchandize is *hope*, is above the petty laws of trade. Who, after taking the trouble of coming here, would lose his chance, however remote he might think it, for the sake of a shilling? Adieu, now, adieu. For aught you—or I—know, your money has not been ill-

spent: at least, when every other hope shall fail you, you will think to yourself, if only for a moment, 'I wonder whether any thing will ever come of it!'—and that one thought, my dear boy, at such a time, will be richly worth a shilling!"

William walked more leisurely—homewards?—he had no home; another night at the inn would almost empty his pockets. What was to be done? Situations did not come, it appeared, when called upon; and it was as absolutely necessary to eat and drink before obtaining one as after. He resolved, in the first place, to hire a cheap apartment; and in the second place—although this was not without a struggle, he was ashamed to think how violent—to offer Burnet assistance in copying, the law-writer having informed him that he was sometimes under the necessity of employing the pen of another. Both these affairs were speedily managed. He was admitted as a lodger in a respectable looking house, on paying a week's rent in advance: and Burnet, having luckily received that day more work than he could himself get through, was glad to accept of his friend's assistance, and did not appear to be in any manner surprised at the offer. This sort of employment was better than nothing; it would at least support life till something better appeared; and there was surely nothing degrading in supporting life by such means. He had promised to meet Burnet the same evening, at the Three Puncheons, the public-house where they had been before; and although wearied with his long wanderings, and faint from want of sustenance, for he had been unable to swallow a morsel of food the whole day, he set out at nine o'clock to keep the appointment. Where was the necessity, it may be asked, for making such a promise at all, surely not very commendable in itself, and peculiarly absurd on the present occasion? Burnet had *paid* the night before. Of such are the reasons that determine the actions of youth.

The company assembled at the Three Puncheons, was much the same as on the evening before, although with the exception of Simpkin, the gentleman shopkeeper, there was no one

present who had on that occasion attracted his particular notice. Burnet had recovered from his gloom; Simpkin indulged the company with a song; the joke and the merry story, neither destitute of decency nor point, ran from table to table; and at length our young and buoyant adventurer, awaking from the lethargy both of body and mind, into which the events of the day had thrown him, began to feel a sensation of absolute enjoyment stealing around his heart. This sensation increased; it became more tumultuous; the hilarity was communicated by degrees to Simpkin and his associates; and at length even to the phlegmatic Burnet. If we only remember for a moment his previous situation both mental and bodily—his fatigue—his want of food—his inexperience in drinking, we shall be prepared for the result, which the patient reader will find detailed in a future chapter.

## CHAPTER V.

### *Gaining a Point.*

'Tis early to begin to fear
The devil at fifteen.

SEDLEY.

WHEN Mr. Vesper, the next morning after we left him at Llanwellyn, awoke from a sleep unbroken except by happy dreams, he heard with some vexation that the London coach had already passed, and that there was not a postchaise to be had in the town. "Poor boy," thought he, "I must not leave him long to himself—he could not be in more dangerous company. He will discover, perhaps this night, the trick I have played with his Bible, and the consequences may be serious." After musing for some time, however, on the disappointment, with that happy philosophy which usually prevails in a well regulated mind, he discovered that all had happened for the best. How did he know, he inquired, what was the real character of her who was to make or mar the happiness of his *protegee?* Was he to be satisfied with the instinctive interest inspired by a pretty face—to fall in love at first sight, and yield up the government of his judgment to his eyes? He determined to cloak his curiosity under the privileges sometimes claimed by elderly gentlemen, and to spend the forenoon, perhaps providentially allowed to him, in prying into the recesses of Helen's mind. "I will wink hard," said he smiling, as he finished his morning's meal, "and her beauty shall not bribe

me; neither shall my senses be charmed with that rich melodious voice, charm she ever so wisely." The half-quaker hat and the shining brown cane were then gaily assumed, and our speculator sallied forth to business.

The morning presented a very beautiful specimen of that most beautiful of all seasons, an English autumn; and the scenery around the little town, with its varieties of height and hollow, wood, lawn, and water, was worthy of the lovely light which called forth its beauty. Mr. Vesper, who was as much in the habit of rejoicing with external nature as if he had been a pantheist in his heart, walked joyously along, and reached the little porch where he had seen the lovers part, at an hour so unseasonably early that he hesitated some time before knocking. The house was of the same size and form as the neighbouring cottages, but distinguished from them by a certain air of neatness, cleanliness, and even taste. The little patch of ground before the wall was laid out with botanical precision into a display of various families of flowers, and defended from the footway by a neat green paling. The porch, of rude lattice work, hung round with jessamine, looked like a garden bower; and the brightly clean glass of a little window on each side glanced through a wreath of vine leaves. "I am not too early,"—determined Mr. Vesper, as the knocker rattled on the door,—"with the mistress of this house it is already mid-day."

In the room into which he was shown by a little girl, he found Miss Howard seated at a table with nearly a dozen children at their studies. The low babbling murmur of their voices ceased as he entered, and the young school mistress, recognising Mrs. Clive's friend, rose up, and with an easy yet dignified politeness, invited him to be seated. The apology for intrusion was then made with old bachelor-like formality, and received with graceful good humour, and Mr. Vesper, whether remembering or not the caution he had imposed upon his eyes and ears, found himself in familiar conversation with the most interesting daughter of Eve he had as yet met with in the course of his studies of human nature.

"This is a serious charge, Miss Howard," said he, after some time, and looking round at the little students; "a heavy responsibility on one so young. The introducers of infant schools, I fear, did not contemplate their being followed up so soon by the appearance of——"

"Infant school-mistresses," suggested Helen, with a smile. "But you do injustice both to me and my establishment. This is not precisely what is called an infant school; for all these children are capable of receiving methodical instruction without injury. The danger, however, even with them, lies in teaching too much, not too little. A child is always learning something—its faculties are never idle; and although for the first short period of its life, it is, and ought to be employed in trying and exercising the instincts of its nature, yet very soon something more is discovered than merely what is requisite for a being destined to perform only the functions of animal life. Whenever this is perceived, either in the acute question, or the perplexed monologue, indicating that the struggles of reason have begun, it is our duty not to develope prematurely the faculties of thinking, but simply to give a tone and direction to the infant thoughts. Those would exist and go on, whether we interfered or not; and our interference, if gently and tenderly exercised, can do no harm. A child may be taught many useful lessons with as little exercise and injury to its thinking faculties as would have been the consequence of its own unassisted attempts to reason; and as these lessons must of necessity be plain and simple, as well as useful to the mind, there can be no reason why a person even so young as I am, should not be intrusted to teach them."

"Are these your own sentiments," inquired Mr. Vesper, "or have you imbibed them from your reading?"

"They were my mother's," replied Helen, "or rather they are my own; for I was never allowed to form an opinion on any subject but one, till I had first examined and found it correct."

"What one do you expect?"

"I allude to religion. I was a Christian before I knew that other forms of belief existed, and I was taught to look for a confirmation of my faith, not in books and arguments, but in the convictions of my own breast. The doctrines of infidelity, when I at length read and listened to them, could not stand a test like this, they had no witness within responding to their truth; there was no moral connexion between them and my soul; and thus their sophisms were not the less impotent, because I was unable to expose them logically; for I could even admire the ingenuity, while I abhorred the doctrine—just as one may still retain a detestation of murder, while he handles admiringly a polished dagger, or sees with a smile the sparkle of a cup of poison."

"Excellent mother!" exclaimed Mr. Vesper, musingly, and only half aloud.

"Oh, yes—excellent mother!" cried Helen, clasping her hands, and breaking at once from the somewhat lecturing position she seemed to have taken, into all the girlish enthusiasm of her age. "Do you know, sir, I sometimes weep when I think of her suddenly (shaking away some glistening drops from her eye lashes) but then, when I think of her long and well—I am so happy!"

"Continue to think of her—Oh, continue"— said Mr. Vesper, taking both the hands of the fair young creature within his, "her memory will be worth more to your soul, than all the saints in the calendar!"

He walked up the room with a troubled step, and leant for a few moments out of the casement, which opened into a little garden at the back of the house. "I am my own gardener," said Helen, "so it is not much expense—at least I am only helped by William—that is, Mrs. Clive's son, when his mother comes sometimes to tea. I often grudge the time, but I love flowers almost as well as if they were living things."

"The time is not mispent," remarked Mr. Vesper, "provided the indulgence involves no sacrifice of more important duties. There are some amusements, and some perfumes—but not the cosmetics of the toilet, young lady—which are conducive both to inward and outward health. The Eastern nations, in the midst of all their ceremonial absurdities, are not very unreasonable in that beautiful connexion they would seem to advocate between the purity of the soul and that of the body. Do you read French and Italian?" continued he, looking at some books on a hanging shelf.

"I read the few books I have," said Helen, "but these are so few that I hardly think I can know the languages."

"And you play—this piano-forte takes up more room than you can well spare. Do you play well?"

"I think I do," replied Helen, with simplicity, "I have even thought that I played well enough to teach, but, although I tried very hard, I could find no pupils—not one."

"Why, did not your friends exert themselves—your relations?"

"Mrs. Clive did all she could, and so did William."

"But your relations?"

"I have no relations; my mother, as you have heard, was discarded by her family, and my father was a stranger in the country. We left the place where we were known, on account of an occurrence which made us resolve never more to return; here my poor mother became unwell, and drooped—and drooped: we could not go out, we were not very rich—and—and somehow or other, we made no friends but the Clives."

Mr. Vesper's lip trembled, and his eyes glistened as he looked at the poor, friendless, solitary girl, standing in the middle of her little apartment, surrounded by the evidences of her industry, and the tokens of a pious, graceful, and accom-

plished mind, and yet presenting so touching a picture of loneliness and desolation. Is it possible, thought he, that this frail and lovely bark could continue to float unhurt, amidst the stormy elements of the world? Are the fables of poets and novelists merely fables, or is innocence really its own protector, as virtue is its own reward? A vain and daring imagination flashed across his mind—what an opportunity to solve the problem! Suppose I were to make the trial, to cast her into the seven times heated furnace, and assay the seemingly pure metal of her soul! But the next moment, rejecting with horror the idea—with what face, thought he, could I afterwards pray for myself, "lead me not into temptation!" What right have I to snatch the sceptre of God from his hands, and assume the exercise of one of the most awful and terrible of the functions of his government? Then, striding up to the object of his meditation, and again seizing both her hands—

"Miss Howard," said he, "I am an old man—I have no child to inherit my property. Various circumstances have conspired almost to estrange me from my species, except in the general sympathies and affections which unite the family of mankind. You, too, are alone—you as much need assistance as I yearn to give it. Although an old man, however, I am not yet quite old enough to make the house of a bachelor a proper asylum, according to the customs of the world, for so young a woman; but allow me, I beseech you, to act the father, notwithstanding. Allow me to inquire into, and supply your present wants, and to place you in a situation where you will at least be secure from the dangers and distresses which here beset your youth—to which even your innocence is a snare, and your every grace and accomplishment a traitor." Helen listened with deep emotion to this singular address; her eyes filled, and for some moments she could not command her voice to reply.

"I am very grateful," she at last almost sobbed—"indeed, indeed I am—but look round you, my dear sir, there is nothing here that bespeaks a poverty which could tempt me to rob the

more needy objects of your benevolence; you see that I have plenty of scholars, and plenty of health—"

"And plenty of pride," added Mr. Vesper.

"Oh, no, it is not—indeed it is not—at least I think—I hope—I am almost sure, it is not pride!"

"It is nothing else," said Mr. Vesper, angrily, but looking at her fondly and admiringly through his anger. Helen pondered for a moment, and then said firmly—

"Well then, sir, this night, when my head is on my pillow, I will try to disembarrass myself from any suggestions, either of pride or meanness; and think calmly what advice my dead mother would have given me. To-morrow forenoon, if you will favour me so far as to come here, I will tell you what counsel I have received."

"To-morrow forenoon I shall be on my way to London."

"To London!" and her cheek flushed, and her eyes sparkled—"then perhaps you will see William Clive. Oh, if you knew how much his mother is rapt up in that only son! He is young, wild, and thoughtless; but high-minded, and high-principled—generous, affectionate."

"To you?" Helen cast down her eyes, but the next moment looking up, answered proudly—

"To all mankind, except the base, the sordid, and the mean."

"My good girl," said Mr. Vesper, "I did not mean to affront you; but what connexion has William Clive with the subject before us? Tell me only what your wishes are, candidly and at once, and to me they shall be commands."

"I have no mother now," replied Helen, "to rejoice in my success, or be cast down even to the grave with my failure; I have a profession adequate to my support; and I am of that

sex which ought to be untroubled with the stirrings of worldly ambition. In all these respects I am different from William Clive. Transfer your benevolent offers of assistance to him! To reject them for myself, in the easy circumstances in which I am placed, could cost me no reasonable sacrifice; but if it did, it should be cheerfully made, being due to friendship and gratitude."

"It shall be done!" said Mr. Vesper, suddenly, and he shook the young orphan's hand with an agitation, that seemed like the trembling of a nervous affection. "Farewell! but not for long; think of your mother, my dearest child; pray for the strange old man, who would have been unto you as a father; remember William Clive; hope all things—and so farewell, and may the blessing of the Almighty remain with you!" Helen followed him to the door, and looked through tears at his retreating figure, till it was lost in the distance.

The rest of that day was spent by Mr. Vesper, in the pleasing, but not very profitable occupation of castle-building; to which a letter written to his friend the Curate, in the evening, might be considered as nothing more than a sequel.

"I have at length found," said he to the worthy backgammon-player, "the very thing for which my soul thirsted. The vague and general instincts which formed my attraction to the species of which I am an individual, are now, in one point, twined and concentrated. I do not, however, love the number of mankind less. The social sympathies and affections, of which the human heart, when in a healthy state, is made up, may be determined to a single object, without being sensibly diminished in their diffusion; just as the rays of the sun may be collected into a focus by the art of the philosopher, without lessening the light of the world. Nay, I may be said to have more love for the species, for the sake of the very individuals who might be imagined to engross and absorb it all. I cannot well describe them to you, for I fear even now that my sentiments may be affected by the prejudices of the senses, and that my ideas of moral and physical beauty may be

so closely confounded as to make me in some measure mistake the one for the other. However, the monstrous absurdity and injustice which men commit every hour of their lives in this way, are not to be marvelled at, or considered as an anomaly in God's government of his creatures by the laws of nature; our palate in the same manner doats upon the sweetmeats which are destructive to health, and turns with loathing from the medicines whose property it is to preserve and restore it: and in both instances we are presented with a striking and beautiful proof of the intended subjection of the animal by the man—of the dominion accorded to reason over the senses.

"My plan is as yet only sketched—the filling up must depend upon circumstances: I pursue the young man to London to-morrow morning. I suffer him to plunge into the stormy ocean of life exulting in his youth and his strength; I follow him afar off like a safety boat, to cheer in time of danger, and succour in case of need; I watch with an anxious eye, and a beating heart, his struggles and buffetings; I see him in the heaving of those tumultuous waves, sink and almost disappear in the gulf between—only to rise more proudly on their foaming tops, and look gallantly to the sun-bright goal of his career; I encourage him from the land when he has nearly completed his probation; I marshal around his mother—his friends—his love—to greet his coming; I open my own arms to receive him, and as he leaps to shore I run and fall upon his neck, and weep aloud for joy.

"The moral history of the young woman will be of a less exciting character. I shall allow her to remain in the calm but useful retirement befitting her sex; I shall supply her from time to time with books, and with such things as are required for the harmless or beneficial accomplishments; I shall watch over the progress and development of her mind; I shall pry curiously into the nice and delicate change which takes place when the innocence of ignorance and inexperience is gradually absorbed into that of principle and reflection; wearied with the strife and excitement of my other thoughts,

I shall retire into the purity and domestic quiet of her mind as to a pleasant home; and at last, when my little romance has drawn to a close, in the intimate union of the two characters, so distinct yet so much alike, I shall possess a happiness without fear and without alloy, and in the calm bosom of that family of love—so far at least as this world is concerned—shall find an abiding place, and a continuing city."

The reply of the Curate, although it interrupts our chronology a little, may as well be given here:

"Better stick to the dice," said that sensible divine—"boys and girls are troublesome things to play with. Well may you call your plan a romance, and it is not the least foolish of the few I have read in my day. The mole may ape the lynx, and be only laughed at for his pains; but when a wise man like you thinks of usurping the place of a providence, it is time to cry—God be with us! No man can calculate to a nicety the effects of human causes. Your intromission for instance with the lad's Bible may be the occasion of his ruin. Your continued action on his destiny must also in any way be injudicious. If it is open and avowed, he can have no merit in braving misfortunes of which he knows the extent and termination; and if it comes like a hap-hazard affair—just in the nick of time, as they say—unless his mind be very well ballasted indeed, he will soon forget that there is a God above him. However, I do not deny that these growls of mine may be partly the effect of ill humour; and of a surety it is enough to injure the temper of a saint to behold the winter at hand, and the nights drawing in, and the fire already looking so cheerful on the hearth—while nothing is seen on The Mount when I take my evening walk but dark windows, or, if I peep sadly in, an empty fire place and a closed dice board. Do, my dear friend, think of it; bring the young couple here forthwith; I shall marry them as hard and fast as the church can do it; and we can then sit rationally down, and teach them backgammon."

## CHAPTER VI.

### *A Blot.*

A Bletherin, blusterin, drunken blellum.

BURNS.

A LONG enough time had elapsed since his last visit to London, to give an appearance of novelty to Mr. Vesper's feelings as he found himself once more entering the huge metropolis. One exulting smile, one throb of patriotic pride were given to nature, as this colossal monument of his country's greatness broke upon his view; but when the carriage rolled into the crowded streets, where famine was seen standing abject at the door of plenty—rags elbowing gay embroidery—smiles sparkling on one face, and tears on another;—where were heard, mingling in wild chorus, the groan and the laugh, the curse, the hail, the shout, and the scream—his smile vanished, and his heart was sad. Not that his mind was cast down by the vicinity of misery, or his brow drawn into frowns at the aspect of crime; at every step he found a redeeming good for every evil, and in contemplating the "mingled yarn" of human life, his adjusted feelings unconsciously settled into the calm which it is the labour of philosophy to seek.

His first business after arrival, was to look for his intended *protegee*—but here an unexpected difficulty occurred. He went to the East India merchant, on whom he knew William was to have called as soon as he reached town; but Mr. Irvine, although patiently and good-humouredly endeavouring to

recollect the circumstance, was some time before he could call to mind that a young man—whose name he did not remember—had, indeed, been with him on the business mentioned by Mr. Vesper a few hours before. William had not left his address, which the man of business thought informal and improper; but he had no doubt that the enquirer would find it at the office of the situation-agent in the neighbourhood, to whom Mr. Irvine usually referred the young men who applied to him on such matters.

To the agent, accordingly, Mr. Vesper went, and was abruptly informed that no such person had been there.

"That is very strange," remarked Mr. Vesper; "can there be no mistake?"

"You see, sir," said the man, turning down his folio, "his name is not here: no one entrusts his business to me whose name and address, together with his wishes, qualifications, and references, I do not set down, in his own presence, in this book."

Mr. Vesper, surprised, sorry, and almost angry, now bent his steps towards the residence of the Blanks. "He has been here," said they, "but he did not leave his address—and, what is odd, he would not come to dinner!"

What is to be done? debated Mr. Vesper within himself, when he was once more in the street—surely the young man is more than usually careless and imprudent. If he depends upon Mr. Irvine alone, does he expect that he will advertise for him when he finds a situation? What could be his reason for not taking the advice so judiciously given, to apply to a man whose interest it would be to assist him? And why, at least, would he not dine with the Blanks, who appear to be good, hospitable sort of people, and both able and willing to assist him in his search for employment?

Meditating in this manner, but, at the same time casting a wary eye at the passers by, in the vain hope of finding, acci-

dentally, the object of his search, he passed the time in traversing the principal thoroughfares, till the evening drew definitely in. At length, passing one of the numerous newspaper-offices in Fleet-street, the idea struck him that an advertisement would be at once the speediest and most efficacious means he could adopt.—He will see it, thought he, to-morrow morning—for no expectant mind in London can rest without reading the daily advertising columns—and I shall be in possession of his address in the course of the day, and at liberty to commence the line of operations I have determined upon.—Having written the notice in a coffee-house, he went into the first office he could find, and presented it to a man who sat upon the counter in a singularly familiar posture, bestriding it with his legs, while he harangued with much unction the clerks behind.

The man had no sooner cast his eye upon the paper, than he sprang from his seat with so sudden a jerk as to expose and enlarge an already considerable rent in his coat beneath the shoulder, through which linen was discovered, innocent, to all appearance, for many months, of soap and water.

"W. C. of Llanwellyn!" cried he, reading the advertisement, "Fetch me, if it is not Bill Clive he means! By the powers that be, my old buck, we will put the seven shillings to a better use than giving them to these cormorant raga-muffins. There—" tearing the advertisement in pieces, "I'll undertake to place you before the eyes of Bill in twenty minutes; but if by that time he is beyond the seeing point, it is neither your fault nor mine, you know—"

"Then you know where he lodges!" inquired Mr. Vesper.

"Where he lodges!" repeated the other, with a stare of drunken humour, "Fetch me, if that is not a good one! Do you know where the cuckoo rests, or the rock-cod turns in? Bill lodges, like many a capital fellow, where he likes, or where he can; but the exact meridian of the spot I believe

is what few can tell—except sometimes when the watchman catches him dozing in his box, or the police offices in the morning prate of his whereabout."

"You know at least where he is to be found," said Mr. Vesper, disgusted, and half alarmed, although aware that his informer must have been almost absolutely ignorant of William's character and habits.

"I know the house he uses," replied Wigwam, "and to prove it, if you will promise to stand something, I will take you there incontinent."

"The house he *uses*?"

"To be sure; but I can tell you, if you are unwilling to stand Sam, there is no use in my going there, for my account has been closed in that quarter for a long time."

"You mean, I presume, that your account is paid, and that you are disinclined to open a new one!"

"No," said Wigwam, "I mean quite the reverse—that my account is *not* paid, and that they won't let me open a new one." Mr. Vesper, ashamed of his companion, and unwilling to enter the haunts of such company, hesitated for some moments; but his so lately-born affection triumphed, and he at length promised to "stand" as much as would do the drinker good—a quantity which Wigwam appeared to think an exceedingly liberal allowance, for he shook the old gentleman heartily by the hand, and declared him to be the honestest fellow he had ever met with in his life. They had not journeyed long, however, along the crowded streets, till he began to think that he was letting his evidently country acquaintance off too easily.

"Odd so!" cried he, stopping suddenly short—"I was like to have committed a grievous error in my reckoning.—Down this blind alley, not above a score of doors off, there is a place where it is ten to one our friend Bill is at this moment, rattling the dominoes, on his way to the Three Puncheons.

Call for what you like," continued he, whispering, as he dragged his companion into the hall of a low public-house— "any thing better than mere heavy, and I will pay you to-morrow." In another moment Mr. Vesper found himself coughing, spitting, and weeping as bitter tears, in a physical sense, as he had ever shed, in an atmosphere of tobacco smoke, where some human figures appeared dimly through the gloom, and various ill assorted voices rung tumultuously in his ears.

Wigwam, after having given his order, cautiously followed by the words "for this gentleman," joined eagerly in the conversation around, and speedily made himself so much at home that he was invited by more than one unwashed artificer to drink out of his glass. This compliment he returned by freely submitting his own, and Mr. Vesper's untasted measure to their discretion; and he was at length only prevailed upon, by a stern whisper from his companion, to bid adieu to the genial scene.

A second time the same trick was successfully played, and our philosopher found himself dragged into a society assembled in a house in Holborn, where the quiet and respectable appearance of the company made him view with a sidelong look of shame the shabby exterior and flustered manner of his companion. "That is Tom Spring," said the latter," eagerly, pointing his finger to a well-dressed man of agreeable features, with the exception of a broken nose, "that is Neat—that is Belcher himself," running over a catalogue of names, which Mr. Vesper remembered to belong to the most celebrated heroes of the fancy.

After emerging from this pugilistic resort, the reporter, finding from the lateness of the hour, that it was absolutely necessary to push directly for their ultimate destination, gave a loose to his imagination, before occupied in schemes of spunging on his companion's inexperience, in topics more interesting and important. His ideas probably received their direction from Mr. Vesper's question:—

"How, sir, did you happen first to become acquainted with Mr. William Clive?"

"Is it with Bill!" said Wigwam. "By the Lord Harry, that is a thing not ill to do! It is but two days since we set eyes on each other, and yet, would you believe it? we are like two cherries, as Shakspeare says, growing on one stalk. We met at the Three Puncheons the first night of his coming to town. There were a dozen of us, good men and true, all quietly engaged in discussing the affairs of the nation, when the young rake-hell made his appearance, hissing hot from Wales. It is surprising the power of moral attraction.—In less time than I could pen a paragraph we were sitting elbow to elbow, lighting pipes at one another's mouths, and drinking out of the same glass. Drinking, indeed, is his fault, though a friend says it; and it was not without some coaxing, and I may add, a little well meant violence, that I got him on his legs at twelve o'clock. Well, sir, you may think I had more bowels than to leave the young man to himself at such an hour, in a strange city, exposed to all the casualties of the night—drunken watchmen, and bad women—for you know, in his then state, a little queerish or so, he might see 'Helen's beauty in a—"

"What is that you say, sir!" said Mr. Vesper, fiercely, "did he mention the name of Helen?"

"Helen!" said the reporter, "I'll take it upon my conscience he did! 'Helen's beauty,' exclaimed he—well, never mind—where was I? Oh, in Piccadilly. "My dear friend,' says, I, 'where are you going—what are you up to?' 'Any thing,' says he, 'have you any blunt?' 'No,' says I, 'I have left my purse at home, and my jade of a landlady will not let me in to fetch it.' 'Never mind, my boy,' says he, 'we will make a night of it, if it costs me fifty pounds!" Here Mr. Vesper groaned. "And so," continued Wigwam, "in spite of all my dissuasions, he took the way to the Finish, in James' Streets, to which I followed him out of sheer compassion for his youth."

"Pray how did he find his way to that den of infamy?" inquired Mr. Vesper.

"'Fore George, it is more than I can say," replied his informer, "but he is a forward youth, that is the truth of it; a lad of genius, upon my honour, only too much given to drink—a little too much given to drink."

"*Your* testimony on that subject," said Mr. Vesper, "I consider to be worth nothing.—The young man is just out of the bosom of his mother's family, in the country, and must be as ignorant, I should think, of the vice of drunkenness as you appear to be of the virtue of sobriety."

"Fetch me, if ever I heard the like!" cried the reporter.

"Hallo, watchman, what's o'clock!"

"Half past ten," muttered the fellow, sulkily, as he passed.

"Look ye then, sir," continued Wigwam, laying hold of Mr. Vesper by the arm, and making a dead stop—"we are within a dozen yards of the Three Puncheons, and I'll bet you a sovereign, that Bill Clive is drunk now!"

"Pooh, nonsense."

"Bet then, only bet,"—fumbling in his empty pockets—"I'll stake the money at the bar, if you doubt my honour; come, is it done?—Do say done! Done?"

"Done!"

"Why, then, done! Give me your fist, my boy, I always said you were a game old cock," and so saying, he shook Mr. Vesper by the hand with much cordiality. As they approached the door of the public-house, loud voices were heard within, which Wigwam pronounced to indicate "a row." The cry of "watch! watch!" was at length heard repeatedly, and as they entered the hall, a storm of acclamations curses, and defiances, mingled with the dragging of tables and

chairs, and the grating noise of shoes on the floor, declared beyond all question that they were entering a field of battle. The reporter pushed forward with the alacrity of his trade, and dragged his companion after him.

"There they are at it!" cried he, "come along, my fine fellow! now is the time—go it, my boys, keep up the glory!" and the two strangely assorted companions burst into the room.

"Well done, Clive!" shouted Wigwam with renewed vociferation, and clapping Mr. Vesper on the back—"there is the man we want, that is Welsh Bill—the leek forever!"

Mr. Vesper's shocked and terrified glance had already sought and found his *protegee.*—He was standing in the middle of the floor, with his waistcoat and shirt torn open; one hand was twisted in the neckcloth of an antagonist, and with the other he brandished the fragment of a chair; while in his hoarse voice and gleaming eyes were but too visible the traces of intoxication as well as rage. The next moment several watchmen burst into the fray, and a general rush was made to the door. Mr. Vesper was carried out into the street by the torrent, which melted suddenly away from before his eyes—all except Wigwam, who stuck pertinaciously by his side.

"Good night," said the former, in a voice divided between sorrow and anger, "good night: you were right, and I thank you."

"Good night?" repeated Wigwam, "what do you mean by that, I should be glad to know? You don't mean to hedge off, do you?"

"Leave me, sir, I am in no mind for further fooling," replied Mr. Vesper, sternly.

"Oh, bloody noses!" cried the reporter, 'here is fooling with a vengeance! I am done as brown as a plum-pudding;

so you don't mean to pay the sovereign you betted me about Bill's sobriety?"

"There—there," said Mr. Vesper, putting the coin into his hand, "and now rid me of your impudent company this moment." Wigwam looked at the money for some moments with a gaze almost of incredulity, and then called after Mr. Vesper in a softened tone.

"Stay, sir," said he, "the night is cold—are you sure that you, too, have not quarrelled with your landlady? Come; frankly, if you are out of a lodging I'll lend you half-a-crown."

"Go home, my good fellow," said Mr. Vesper, "to your family, if you have one, but at any rate to your own thoughts; good night—good night!" Wigwam walked rapidly and steadily on for some time. "I will go home," thought he, "fetch me, if I dont?" but his resolve was interrupted by the door of a public-house opening as he passed, to let some person out.

"Is there any body in the parlour, Will?" said he to the waiter.

"Yes, Mr. Wigwam," replied the man, who knew him, "we have still two or three. Do you mean to come in?"

"Oh, no; I asked merely from curiosity. A fine moon, Will."

"Yes, sir; good night."

"Good night—oh, stay; you said, I think, you had still a few in the parlour; well, I don't care if I do look in.—No, I won't—good night—stop, I'll just go as far as the bar, but not a step further, not a step. Did you say two or three, Will?" and so saying, Wigwam went in, and the door shut.

## CHAPTER VII

### *The Deuce.*

Then the spirits that still float above the wreck of happiness.
Are driven o'er the shoals of guilt, or ocean of excess,
The magnet of their course is gone, or only points in vain,
The shore to which their shiver'd sail can never stretch again.
BYRON.

It was late the next morning when William Clive awoke, and looked round his apartment with something of the dismay which may be supposed to agitate a guilty spirit on rising up from the sleep of the grave. His temples throbbing with almost intolerable pain, his whirling stomach, his swollen eyes, his giddy brain, and his cold and clammy limbs, gave fearful token of a first intoxication; but within, all was doubt and confusion, indefinite dread, remorse without an object, and memory without circumstance. Indistinct sounds rung in his ears, shapeless forms sailed before his eyes and, although it was broad daylight, a "horror of great darkness" seemed to brood over his heart. Presently a pang of recollection darted across his brain, and he would fain have taken refuge in the original gloom from a light still more dismal. Then the circumstances of the scene, in which the night before he had been a principal actor, came one by one before his mind, with all their absurd and debasing details, and a feeling almost of wonder attended the sense of shame and degradation.

"A gentleman's son!" he repeated, bitterly, as his mother's parting advice sounded in his ears;—"a thinking being—

a—" but the word that was to follow refused to pass the foul and parched lips which would have uttered it; and he hid his face in the bed clothes.

"But my mother will not hear of this," he exclaimed, starting up: "my saintly Helen will be spared the shock—and never, never will it again be possible even for the tongue of malice to whisper such a tale! They will not hear of it," he continued, pressing suddenly his trembling hands to his temples. "How will they not hear of it? Good God, what phantom is this which passes before me? A dream—nothing but a dream! a fragment of my hideous sleep, which remains to terrify my scarcely awakened senses! Surely it is impossible that the malice of hell itself could have sent to so obscure and distant a spot an accusing witness of my shame;" and he turned a fierce and glaring eye upon the void of his chamber, as if eagerly inspecting a crowd of objects before him. "The old man! the old man!" he at last cried, dashing himself down violently upon the bed. "My mother's friend!—spy—traitor—devil!" and he gave loose to an ungovernable fit of rage, of which he was himself the principal object.

When his feelings had spent their force, he dressed himself more calmly, and then sat down, in spite of headach and nausea, to the paper he had undertaken to copy. The attempt, however, was vain. Whatever power may be exerted over the mind by moral resolution, it sometimes fails of immediate effect when applied to the body, which is actuated proximately by machinery peculiar to itself; and thus William, although capable of controlling his sensations of pain and sickness, which craved relief in air and exercise was unable to compel his shaking hand to draw one straight line, or form one legible letter. He at length gave up the hopeless task, and with feelings of shame and anxiety, took his way to Burnet's house, who he knew was under the necessity of delivering the original and its copy to his employer in another hour.

The law-writer was busy poring over his accustomed manuscripts, and instead of the look, either of ridicule or re-

proof, which William was prepared to encounter, he turned upon his visitor, when he entered, a glassy eye, which indicated no recollection, whether pleasant or unpleasant, of any thing except the employment in which he was immediately engaged.

"You have brought the paper," he remarked—William laid it on the table.

"And the copy?—William shook his head.

"What do you mean?" cried Burnet, in alarm.

I have been, and am unwell—very unwell: I could not copy that paper to save myself from starvation."

Burnet threw himself back in the chair, and opened his eyes upon his friend with an expression made up of wonder, fury, and contempt.

"You are aware, sir," said Willlam, getting angry in his turn, "that I am altogether unaccustomed to drinking: you must have known last night what the effect of the debauch would be this morning; and in making myself both criminal and ridiculous, I have as much your encouragement and example to blame as my own folly."

Burnet had by this time began the task of copying the paper himself in great perturbation. "It is very well," was his reply—"Oh, it is very well—very well—very well," muttering the words between his teeth: but when William attempted to recommence his harangue—

"S'death, sir!" cried he, "leave me alone. I am a hard-working man; I cannot afford, not I, to be either sick or lazy. Get you gone to your starvation, since you like it; but remember for the future that you have no right to endanger another man's bread, either by drinking more than your nerves will sustain, or by undertaking more than you have resolution to perform." William, abashed and conscience-stricken, did not venture a reply, but descended the stairs in

silence, and plunged into the living street, one of the most miserable of the beings by whom it was crowded.

A stranger in London, without a single respectable friend to advise—without funds to live another week without employment—what was he to do? To go home? This was yet possible: he had money enough to pay his fare to Llanwellyn, and to support life on the road. But with what face was he to present himself before his mother and Helen; how account for the time he had spent; how meet the accusation which Mr. Vesper had perhaps already forwarded against him? How rational and manly an effort he had made to secure that independence for which his childish longings had embittered his mother's life for years! What an account he was prepared to give of the wonders of the metropolis—of the treasures of antiquity—the curiosities of history—the marvels of art which it contained! "No," concluded he, "I cannot, must not, will not return; even Helen herself, while she will unconsciously exaggerate my folly, will be unable to make due allowance for the insignificance of my means, and the paucity of my opportunities; here must I live as long as life is possible; here must I achieve a subsistance or perish."

Every thing, however, was new and strange around him. He was like a mariner ship-wrecked on some foreign coast, in danger of famishing from very ignorance of the people's language and manners. If he could but discover in what manner he might be servicable, or in what terms he ought to offer his services, to the many thousands around him, to whom affluence and conventional custom rendered necessary the hired assistance of their fellow men! How little in the mean time, would suffice for his wants—how circumspectly he might live, till even in his low and humble situation, he should be caught by the tide of fortune in its flow—*till something should turn up!* Magical words! Most potent of all the spells that are uttered in the superstition of youthful hope! A bright glow rose into William's cheeks, as the thought passed through his mind, and his perturbed spirit fastened upon

that undefined and undefinable *something*, with the tranquillity of Sindbad's crew, when they anchored on the whale.

"Yes,' said he, quickening his pace along the street, as if in pursuit of some visible and determined object; "any thing whatever will do in the mean time, just *till something turns up!*"

Among the few individuals with whom he had formed a casual acquaintance, he found himself attracted most strongly, perhaps by the sympathy of desperation, to Mr. Wigwam, the reporter. The others had seemed to treat him with a respect due rather to his hopes, than his means, and to Wigwam alone he could reveal his real situation, without embarrassment and shame. There was besides another reason, which determined him in his choice of a confidant.—His mother's prejudices against a mercantile life, although unsupported by even a show of reason, and therefore always carefully kept in the back ground by him, had nevertheless sunk deep enough into his heart to have some effect upon the dreams and reveries which fill up so much of a stripling's life. The literary ambition, on the other hand at which we have hinted, although hardly enough formed to deserve the name of a passion, was yet sufficiently strong to cut a formidable part in the mental contest, which takes place when a man's predilections are consulted, and his resources examined, in a case that may be decided by the turning of a straw To literature too, he was attracted by the very desperation of his mind, just as a man will usually prefer carrying his last guinea to the gaming table, or the lottery, no matter what denomination they assume, rather than to a common market of profit and loss. A single fortunate hit, thought he, may attract the attention of the public, and raise me to the pinnacle of my hopes; a congeniality of thought, a similarity of subject, nay, even a turn of expression may be the means of introducing me to those who will be proud to promote my advancement;—it will be exhibiting to the world the stores of my mind, be they rich or scanty, and a just value cannot

fail to be put upon them by those who have no interest whatever in disguising their sentiments.

Amusing himself with this precious reasoning, he took the way to a newspaper office, where he knew Wigwam was frequently to be found in the forenoon. It should not be disguised that William was perfectly aware of the dissolute habits, and somewhat disgusted by the vulgar effrontery of this person; nay, even at this moment, he felt a kind of reluctance to be seen associated in broad day-light with so *shabby* a ruffian. The man's principles, it is true, would have been the same whether his coat was whole or not, but our adventurer knew that the world is accustomed to argue on outside premises, and, besides, he was in that respect one of the world himself, and felt strongly the instinctive disgust of old clothes, which is the moral *shiboleth* between the Jew and the Christian. If a man of Wigwam's appearance and manners, he argued, can make a living at all by so confined a branch of the trade of literature, what may not I expect? But while he was in the midst of this speculation, he saw the reporter issuing hastily from the door of the office.

He was for some time in doubt as to his identity, so great a change had taken place in his external appearance: but Wigwam's physiognomy was of too striking a character to be long mistaken. He was now dressed in a fashionable great coat, which, although by no means new, was whole and well brushed, and covered very handsomely the multitude of sins of his under-garments. His hat was nicely smoothed, his shoes bright and clean, and above all, his face was well washed and trimmed. In this guise Wigwam appeared to be really a personable man; there was something portly in his figure, which is frequently taken for dignity by the lean, and the impudent pertinacity of his stare might have passed very well for the habitual freedom of a man of consequence. With merely a nod of recognition, he was about to pass quickly by; but William, whose desire for an audience was strangely increased by the metamorphosis, laid hold of him by the arm and kindly inquired after his health.

"But you seem in a hurry," continued he, "or perhaps you see your friends only in an old coat, by way of avoiding the appearance of formality?"

"That *is* a good one," said Wigwam, delighted with any body's joke, at any body's expence; "but the truth is, a little stroke of good luck has befallen me, and I am determined to make hay while the sun shines."

"What—a legacy, perhaps? or your rich friends have at last relented?"

"Yes," answered Wigwam, "my uncle has given me something!" and he looked up with a significant smile, which William did not then understand, at three golden balls dangling from the wall over head.

"I should rejoice at your good fortune at any rate," said William, "but more particularly at the present moment, when I feel ambitious of taking your place of reporter, should you be inclined to retire."

Wigwam stared, and William continued, more abashed than he expected to have been.

"The truth is, I must either find employment at once, or return to Wales; there is no other alternative. My friends give me no immediate hope of a respectable situation, and, till something turns up, I should be glad to employ whatever talents I may possess in ministering to the curiosity of the public as a reporter of domestic news, with the purpose of extending my views to the higher departments of literature, when I shall have acquired a sufficient knowledge of the *locale* of the London Parnassus."

William spoke quick, but Wigwam seemed to have great difficulty in keeping his gravity till the speech was concluded, at the end of which he broke into a loud chuckle, for he never laughed outright.

"Pardon me, my dear fellow," said he at length, perceiv-

ing a flush of resentment gather in his young friend's cheek; "it is not at you I laugh, upon my word it is not—but at myself. Do you know where my thoughts were at that time? —Why some ten years back—

"'O'er the dark rereward and abysm of time'—

I was then marching along this very street, a fine young fellow of five and twenty, a good oaken stick in one hand, and my wardrobe, tied up in a pocket handkerchief, in the other.

Those spires of St. Paul's appeared to me to surmount the temple of the muses—this Ludgate-hill was a Parnassus, and that muddy kennel a Helicon! I too talked of literature, and dreamed of fame, and lived soberly, and slept soundly—ha! ha!—why don't you laugh?"

There was something in the tone of voice in which the sudden question was put, which sent a cold thrill through William's veins.—A stage-coach rattled past them at the moment, loaded with passengers and baggage for the country, and it was with a bitter sigh he read the word "Monmouth" on the sides—The streets appeared to narrow around him, and the atmosphere to become thicker, and when the reporter addressed him again, he heard his voice with a start and a gasp.

"You have no prospect of other employment?" said Wigwam in his usual manner.

"No immediate prospect," replied William, hastily. The reporter smiled.

"Your purse is empty?"

"Almost."

"You are firmly resolved not to return home?"

"Absolutely."

"And you would still eat?"

"To be sure."

"Then I commend, nay I applaud your purpose; and although I have no immediate thoughts of quitting the profession myself, you are as welcome to my services and my advice as if I had. What—there is room for us all—the more the merrier, say I."

They had now dived deep into the city, and William found himself in an unknown region. Their conversation was interrupted by the denseness of the crowd, through which Wigwam plunged with an adroitness, which excited the envy of his companion, who by this time began to exhibit symptoms of fatigue that would probably have been still very distant in a ramble through a thicket. The moving mass became thicker every moment, and its motion more headlong and tumultuous; and at length on turning a corner, a sound as if of near thunder was heard, and a fire-engine, on which eight or ten men were quietly seated, some of them smoking their pipes, rushed at full gallop into the bosom of the multitude.

Splitting like an enormous wave torn by the prow of some headlong bark, the crowd gave way on all sides; but closing again instantly with all the compactness of a fluid body, it followed the machine with emulative fury, till compelled to re-open by the same interruption. Engine after engine rushed past in quick succession; the windows were filled with eager faces; the shops were shut up; and the roar of the living torrent became mightier, and mightier, till its progress was stopped by some seemingly impassible barrier, and the rear thrown back many yards by the reaction.

In front nothing was seen but a cloud of smoke surmounting the houses, through which the smothered flame was obesrved to rise perpendicularly at intervals, like a golden pillar dimly seen at night. Presently streams of water were descried entering the body of vapour in all directions, and their splashing on the walls, and the crashing of the glass windows which followed were heard above the human noises of the street. In some places the smoke appeared to be swallowed up by the conquering flames, and when a mightier

glare arose, illuminating for a moment both heaven and earth, the huge rabble below sent forth a shout as if applauding a scene in a tragedy.

William gazed on this novel spectacle with intense curiosity, chastened by an awe so profound as to lend much of the sublime to his feelings. As for Wigwam, he stood with his back to the wall, projecting his knuckles, and elbows for the defence of his person, and appearing to look with cool and business-like attention on what was going on. Some human figures were at length seen through the smoke at the windows of the devoted buildings, and various articles of furniture were thrown over, and crashed upon the street below.

"This is dreadful!" whispered William to his companion, as the painful predominating in his feelings, overthrew all ideas of the sublime.

"Fine? Isn't it?" said the reporter, "a capital beginning for you—a practical lesson worth a thousand lectures. Take care that you are not looking with your eyes shut; see and hear every thing that is to be seen, and imagine more than it is possible to see. In half an hour the whole affair must be down in black and white; in half an hour more it must be tumbling through the press; and in two hours more it must be in the hands of the whole town. To show the good will I entertain for you, you shall have the task of writing the paragraph, and we shall divide the produce between us."

This announcement renewed the trembling of William's nerves, and he was on the point of remonstrating against the imprudence of putting so weighty an affair into the hands of a novice.

"Really, Mr. Wigwam," said he, "I cannot help dreading the suddenness of the trial. I never saw a fire before, and I fear my account of it would be thought by the experienced to be somewhat turgid and redundant."

"Redundant, my dear fellow!" replied Wigwam, "make

yourself perfectly easy on that head—it shall be cut and clipped, and paired and gutted to your heart's content, I assure you. Bless you, you will not know your own manufacture when you see it in print."

"There is little," remarked William, without appearing to notice the consolation thus offered, "little of the merely human interest about this scene which we usually find in the printed details of a conflagration. Perhaps we are not near enough to hear or witness the particulars of accidents in the crowd and the fire—the escapes or fate of the inmates—the thousand circumstances of fear, surprise, and curiosity which fill up the awful detail."

"The deuce we are not!" exclaimed Wigwam, "look at that window to the left, where the flames are just beginning to take hold. Do you see a lady leaning over, with an infant in her arms——"

"No, I don't!"

"Which she appears in the act of dropping into the street, when a cloud of smoke envelopes the whole building, and leaves the horror-struck spectators in ignorance of the event!"

"I see not a tittle of all this."

"Did you not observe that one of the fire-men—a fine young fellow by the way, with a wife and eleven children—was hurried to an untimely fate by seven of the engines playing upon him at once while he was endeavouring to fix a ladder at one of the burning windows?"

"No, indeed!"

"You at least hear it whispered among the crowd that the wife of one of our city members, as she happened to be cheapening a cod's head and shoulders at the fishmonger's opposite, was so terrified by the appearance of the flames, that the honourable house is likely to be disappointed of a son and heir?"

"No, no."

"But this wants confirmation. And finally," hurrying him away, "you know it to be reported, on too good authority you fear, that the number of lives ascertained to be lost, was thirteen———"

"Not a word of it!"

"When we went to press." Wigwam buffeting his way with sturdy strokes, was soon clear of the crowd, and darting into the first obscure public house he fell in with, the two friends sat down to concoct their account of what they had witnessed. Our adventurer's power of composition, such as it was, did not desert him on the pinch; and Wigwam dictating his own apocrypha, besides many really important details that had as completely escaped the observation of William, the whole business was finished in a very short time, and the adept and novice hurried away with continued speed to the printing-house. The next morning, William had the satisfaction of seeing his first paragraph in print, and almost entire, and of eating a dinner for the first time in his life, of his own earning.

"This is your treat, lad," said Wigwam, when they had finished, "you observed how they left out all my ingenious circumstantialities, except the mere details of place and person!" Our author was not yet polite enough to tell a lie, and therefore he did *not* say he was surprised.

"Hang them," continued Wigwam, "they smoked the old hand! But what can we do? The knaves know very well that the public will not swallow a mere catalogue of accidents, like the bankrupt list, and a man cannot easily get up a new fire fifty-two times in the year. By the way, I breakfasted too at your expense to-day. You will see the paragraph in that newspaper of last evening, read it carefully when you go home—it will give you another lesson in your new business." That night, before going to bed, and just after indulg-

ing in a happy reverie, our adventurer pulled the paper from his pocket, and read with great admiration the following specimen of Mr. Wigwam's genius:

"*Interesting Circumstance.*—Last night the neighbourhood of Dean Street was thrown into the utmost consternation by cries of murder and other appalling sounds proceeding from the respectable tavern called the Three Punchеons, kept by Mr. Miles Froth, brother to the late Mr. Froth of the Cheshire Cheese. The alarm was first communicated by Mr. Jenkins, the tobacconist, of No. 47, to Mrs. Ball, the lady of Mr. Ball, the pawnbroker, of No. 48, who, with the utmost promptitude, ran down in person to the corner of the street, and awoke the watchman. The watchman sprung his rattle, and having succeeded in collecting four of his brethren, they proceeded direct to the spot, accompanied by Mr. Jenkins, Mrs. Ball, and other respectable neighbours.—On entering the parlour, a scene of uproar presented itself which beggars description. A young man of lofty stature, and more than half naked, his clothes having been torn in strips from his back, stood in the middle of a field of contest, strewed with the fragments of his weapons, and the victims of his vengeance. He was evidently fresh from the country, and fresh also in another sense, and had quarrelled with an individual present for having won from him at dominoes the severed half of a sixpence presented to him as a true love token by his mistress. The company interfered, affirming that the half sixpence was fairly won; and the infatuated youth, instantly snatching up a chair, run a muck all round the room. We are happy to say that no lives were lost in this singular affair, which was terminated by the young man being kindly advised to go home. Mr. Jenkins, the tobacconist, and Mrs. Ball, the pawnbroker's lady, with the other respectable neighbours soon after separated to their respective houses, Mr. Jenkins bidding Mrs. Ball good night, and Mrs. Ball remarking, 'It was well it was no worse.'"

Our hero had no sooner perused his anecdote, than he clapped his hat on his head, and cast a ferocious look about the

room in search of his stick. The stick, however, had absented itself ever since the affair so faithfully and minutely chronicled above, and being thus allowed time for reflection, his good humour returned, and, indulging in a hearty laugh, by way of supper, he went to bed.

William was soon able to go on without the assistance of a master, and continued for sometime to derive a subsistence, more precarious and more miserable every day, from what he began at last to think was a prostitution of his talents. His reports, it is true, possessed in a high degree the charm of *imagination*, but this is a quality altogether distinct from falsehood; and although he was frequently obliged to mingle in scenes revolting both to his heart and judgment, it was not as one of the actors, but as an observant spectator, extracting wisdom from folly, and reading lessons of virtue in the acted history of crime. We are not to imagine, however, that, like the Babylonian Jews of old, he walked through the furnace without "an hair of his head being singed, his coat burned, or the smell of fire passing on him." Alas! although at the sound of the flute, and the harp, and the dulcimer, he fell not openly down before the golden image which the King of Darkness had set up, yet his ear was often charmed by the syren music of sin, and his heart secretly enticed after its idolatry.

In that heart there was a store of pure thoughts, and tender and holy recollections not yet exhausted. Helen, the first object of his love, was the first being who had awakened within him those sentiments of piety which are the only stable foundation of moral principle. To think of her was to recall to his memory not only the blissful dreams of youth but all the lessons of virtuous fortitude which had fallen from her lips, and which he had read in her conduct—all the religious associations which make even this earth of ours a vast temple—all the lofty and ennobling aspirations which separate and sanctify the soul of man from the spirits of the beasts which go down to the earth.

A little portrait in China ink, which he had himself taken of that dear face, and which he still fondly treasured, was a talisman of peace to recall his wandering thoughts, and lead them through paths of love and beauty to the Fountain of all good. It is not sufficient condemnation to say, that if this link had been broken—this medium of connexion withdrawn, the hold would have been loosed which held his feebled principles aloft from the gulf of the world: the remark could only suggest itself to a thoughtless mind, forgetful that "God hides his providence behind second causes"—that we have all—whatever be its form, or nature, or denomination—our store of hidden thought—our secret portrait, or lonely image—our monitor and remembrancer, in the day of danger.

William consulted his talisman every day with less and less self-satisfaction. "Severe in youthful beauty," holy in virgin purity, Helen seemed to bend sorrowful and reproachful eyes upon her lover. His time running away unimproved, his task appearing every day more mean and sordid, his very style of writing becoming debased, as he found himself drilled and hackneyed into the trade—what was he to do to withdraw himself from the hasty perdition into which he was sinking? Was it possible that the fate of Wigwam awaited him?—and he shuddered as the question flashed across his mind.

"There is still a chance for me!" he exclaimed—"I will try the magazines. I am at present lost in the crowded letter-press and chaotic variety of a newspaper. Who, on reading the account of a murder, or a fire, or a natural prodigy, thinks of asking the name of the writer? Let me stamp the impress of my mind upon a page even of a month's endurance; let me familiarize the public, if possible, to the sight of my name, or if this be out of rule, let me at least have something to refer to, in offering my services to the booksellers."

On the same day he fell in with Mr. Wigwam—no longer the steady, fat, respectable, great-coated man he had been for some weeks, but a spare, dirty, ruffian-like fellow, buttoned up to the shirtless chin in a tight rusty black coat. The moral

cycle had gone round, and Wigwam, instead of a being of some natural sense, and some acquired shrewdness, rendered interesting by some dream-like glimpses, caught from the dimm'd glass of memory, of worth, and honour, and early hope, —was now a vulgar, reckless, dissolute and most desperate vagabond. His mind, however, still retained in some respects, its peculiar form and pressure, and his remarks, if neither just nor original, in spite of the redundance of absurd or revolting expletives, were sufficiently striking.

"And so, young one," said he "you are at last come to your 'ulterior views of the higher departments of literature?' I thought it would end in this, split me! You gape at the stars, and pay them honour because you fancy they are above you. Go, study astronomy, and it will tell you that there is no such thing as up or down in the whole region of space. It is just so with periodical writing. The penny-a-line reporter, the weekly journalist, the monthly magazine hack, and the quarterly reviewer, are all on an equal footing. In what do you suppose the difference to consist? In subject? Is there a single subject in the whole range of literature, which possesses more interest, and even dignity to men, than the crimes, follies, and accidents of human life? Are you sore at the clipping your articles sustain? Ask the magazine writer how many of his he sees entire; and if he answers, every one, enquire again, how many do not go in at all, in consequence of the restriction which his own or the editor's delicacy imposes upon the scissars. Do you strike for wages? Take the bull by the horns, my young swell; never be ashamed of your bread and butter, and blush, as Sawney hath it, like a beggar at a bawbee. What think you is the rate of the magazines?—why from two to ten pounds per sheet. How many of our lines would fill a sheet of sixteen pages, averaging more than six hundred words per page? You stare at the question—you ponder—you calculate—but I will save you further trouble, by pronouncing at once, that the product of your work will indicate something just about half way between the maximum and minimum of magazine prices. You thus



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see that we possess that golden mean, about which the poets prate so much and know so little. What, then, are the advantages which these dons of periodical literature possess over us? They are kept in suspense for a month or a quarter. we for a minute or a night; if their shot misses, they lose the labour of many a weary day, and many a sleepless night—we, the pastime of an idle hour, or the frolic of a jolly evening. Does your conscience start at the poetical flight we are sometimes obliged to take? Oh, there are worse things than that in other branches of the profession! Only fancy a poor devil, compelled by hunger and request of friends, to write.—Look at him," continued Wigwam, grasping his companion's arm—"look at him, with his pale face and hollow cheek, bending over the portentous page. Perhaps his thin and solitary candle plays upon some little sleepers by his side, feasting on a supper in their dreams, of which their waking hunger had been cheated; perhaps a wife—an aged mother—an orphan sister—aye, or all three, flit like shadows through the apartment, conversing only with their eyes, and silent both in their hope and their despair, lest their voices should disturb the studies so fraught with doom. Or fancy him—sink the pathetic!—fancy him alone—Oh, not alone! His chamber is filled with a thousand phantoms of delight—a thousand hope-gilded visions pass one by one before him. Look, he throws down the pen, as some happy thought has tinted the paper *couleur de rose*, and while reading over the passage, beautiful perhaps only in imagination, his voice is broken into sobs, and warm tears gush from his eyes. The book is completed—printed—published—*criticised*. Ha! ha! ha! only look at him now! See the women, with their frozen cheeks, and stony gaze—and the hungry children—ha! ha! ha!

"My dear sir—" said William, in some alarm at his vehemence.

"But you don't see the author himself—the delighted dreamer—the fairy castle-builder! Look at his white lips, as silent

as death; his fingers crushed within each other, his jaws locked——ha! ha! ha!——Do you think," continued Wigwam, suddenly lowering his voice, and speaking sternly and distinctly—"Do you think, if that cove could get hold for love or money of—" and he imitated the action of drinking—"do you think he would not drain—ay, if hell-fire was at the bottom!" William shuddered; for he remembered to have heard that Wigwam was a widower, and a childless father.

"I was once an author myself," said the latter, resuming his apparently constrained jocularity—"and so I can tell you a thing or two on that head. Could you guess what I wrote?"

"No, I cannot."

"Ha! ha! ha! It chokes me to think of it—it does, indeed; I wrote—how you will laugh—a poem!"

"You! a poem!"

"By ——!" said Wigwam; and, seeming to be in reality almost choking with the convulsive chuckle which he was in the habit of substituting for laughter, he shook William vehemently by the hand, and, turning down a narrow alley, was soon out of sight.

William, as it usually happens, had not asked his friend's advice till his resolution was taken; nor in fact till an article had been written, and even sent to one of the magazines. The interim of suspense, in spite of Wigwam's croaking, was not all "a phantasma and a hideous dream," but, on the contrary, a period of busy and happy anticipation; and when, at length, he saw his first essay in print, and soon after hurried to the banker with a check for a larger sum than he had ever before possessed in his life, he enjoyed his success not as a "lucky hit," but as the realization of a well-grounded hope. Something had at last turned up—something well worth the price even of years, instead of months, of suffering and privation. He was now entered on his career;

the eyes of the world were fixed on him, and all he desired was a clear stage and no favour.

The next day, when glancing over a newspaper, he saw, with a flush of the cheek and a throb of the heart, a notice of the magazine. His own piece was not merely mentioned with commendation, indeed with praise, but it was stated to be the production of "Mr. Clive, a young writer of extraordinary promise!" How strange that a secret had transpired so well concealed under the mask of initials! How extraordinary that the prying eyes of the world should have found him out even in the obscurity and loneliness, and poverty of his present situation! His thoughts so far from straying to the well-meaning friend who had procured the insertion of the "puff," kept carefully aloof; and when, at length, a country echo pronounced the article to be "worthy of the elegant pen of Mr. Clive," poor Wigwam was dropt like a bankrupt patron. William, for a few days, seemed to tread on air; he already looked on himself as a public character; and when taking his seat in the mean eating-house where he condescended to dine, his eyes stole consciously round the room, as if hoping that no one there recognised "Mr. Clive."

During this blissful period, he wrote to his mother; his communications hitherto had been few and brief; each letter referring to a future one, and forgetting the promises of the last. Now, however, he made amends for his reserve; his full heart overflowed upon the paper, and he painted his prospects in all the gorgeous hues of youthful hope. "In another month," he added, in a postcript, with affected moderation, "I shall write to Helen, when I trust to have something to communicate more worth her hearing."

In the mean time, his expences increased in proportion to his new-found revenue; credit, that before had never been dreamed of, was asked with coolness, and granted with customary facility; and when his purse was at length entirely exhausted, recourse was had, with friendly indifference, to the pockets of his companions.

The last day of the month arrived—magazine day, as it is called among the trade—and he flew with breathless expectation to the office. The table of contents was ransacked, but in vain; and the leaves then turned over one by one with trembling care. His piece was omitted. Stupified, at first, with the blow, he allowed the pamphlet to drop from his hands upon the counter; but the next moment, eagerly catching it up again, he turned to the "Answers to Correspondents"—where he found these chilling words—"Mr. Clive's article is inadmissible."

That evening, while sitting before his expiring fire, gazing with a vacant wildness at the portrait of Helen, which, a few days before, he had framed and glazed, and hung up above his little mantel-piece, the postman's knock was heard at the door. William's heart quailed at the sound. The door shut, and slow steps began to ascend the stairs.

"It is for the first floor!" he said aloud, as if to arrest the further progress of the messenger; but the slow steps passed the landing place. They stopped for a moment at the second floor, and William had already began to thank God—when the pat patting was recommenced, ascending higher and higher, and striking deeper and deeper till the tread seemed to be upon his heart. Two letters, one from his mother and one from Helen, were put into his hands; and so affected were his nerves at the sight of a hand-writing which had been wont to make his spirit leap with joy, that it was some minutes before he could muster courage to open them.

"My darling William," wrote Mrs. Clive, "the wishes of a mother's heart at length are gratified, and a career is opened for you befitting a gentleman's son. I always thought you would turn out to be above commerce; and I confess it was not without a struggle, in spite of their wealth, that I ever gave you a letter to those low-born, low-lived, and low-minded Blanks—for you are not to learn, my love, that, although certainly relations, they are of a very mean and distant branch

of the family. I am still not without anxiety on your account. Taken notice of, as no doubt you are by this time, by the rich and the noble, you have a card to play not very easy for so young a hand. Young as you are, however, you are now absolutely grown into a man, and will no doubt speedily perceive, as your acquaintance with the great world goes on, that it is now time to think of forming an establishment for yourself. Your playmate, Helen, too, has already taken leave of the girl, and no doubt casts round her eyes, demure as they are, in search of what luck will send her. She laughs, of course, at the childish nonsense which you and she used to prattle together; and even if she did not laugh—which I assure you she does—she is far too good a creature to stand in the way of the advancement of a gentleman's son." William, for a few moments, covered his face with his hands, ashamed of blushing for a parent; and then took up Helen's letter, which ran thus:—

"William,

"Your last agreeable letter to your mother renders the task I have now undertaken much easier. That task, believe me, is not undertaken on loose report, or without mature deliberation. While you were at your mother's fireside I esteemed the many virtues, and passed over, with perhaps, a too partial eye, the many foibles of your character. What you were then, was unknown even to yourself; and the friend with whom I walked so often, and talked so freely, and dreamed so wildly, was no other than a creature of my own imagination. You were then in the dark, reclining under the shadow of the roof-tree of your house; *now* the colours of your mind have been brought out and exhibited by the sun, and I can no longer plead the excuse of ignorance for my folly. Your course in London has been carefully traced—but from the most tender and affectionate motives—by one whom I love as a friend, and honour as a benefactor. The dreadful place in which you passed your first night—your ridiculous and degrading situation on the second night—on the third

day your absolute refusal of that employment which you pretended to seek, besides the uniform carelessness which you exhibited from the beginning in the search—the despicable and dissolute society in which you have passed your time—all are known to him. I will not, in addition to these enormities, introduce a circumstance trifling in itself—the mention in the most base and vulgar ears of an obscure, and, perhaps, little regarded name;—but, oh! I should be so happy if I could touch even that spirit of worldly honour which I mistook for something nobler, and rouse you from the lethargy of the senses, if not of the soul! The task, however, has passed from my hands; you are to me from this day simply as one of the mass of mankind—as one whom I love and pray for only as a brother of humanity. Farewell!"

## CHAPTER VIII.

### *A man in Jeopardy.*

Behold the mighty city, stretched beneath;
The moonbeams on its dim and silent towers
Slumber, and wide and far, on either side,
Bright lamps in rows stand thick, as if a host,
With torches in their hands, were marshall'd there
For some night ceremony.

J. A. ST. JOHN.

Night drew her shade over the earth; the mariners contemplated from their ships, Helice and Orion; the traveller and door-keeper were drowsy; the sleeping mother forgot her dead children; there was no barking of dogs heard through the city, nor any loud sound; and silence attended upon the black darkness.

APOLLONIUS RHODIUS.

THE minds of men are not merely different from each other in their capacity of suffering, but from themselves. In some moods of thought, Helen's letter would have been productive simply of indignation; William would have drawn up with the restrained fury and haughty air of one who had received an insult which it would be unmanly to avenge; and his sense of the wrong would have been signified only by a cold and gloomy silence. In the present case the feeling was different, and yet its external indication the same. His heart had already been seized with a panic; his hopes had withered in the bud; the gulf was closing around him, and whichever way he turned, darkness and terror met his view. It was natural under such circumstances to call himself to account—to hold an inquest on his dead prospects, and inquire how they came by their doom. The "injustice of the

world" is only a sneaking paltry excuse, and deceives no one, not even the apologist himself; the rankling of self-reproach is seen and felt beneath it; and when the lips are loudest in complaint, the heart with its still small voice is heard to whisper, O, that I had done those things which I ought to have done, and left undone those things which I ought not to have done! William, in spite of himself, inquired rigidly into his conduct since his arrival in London, and, like a hard master, demanded account of every talent. What had been his efforts to procure the subsistence he had come to seek? How closely had they been followed up? How instantly had every opportunity been embraced? Had he suffered himself to be led astray by the suggestions of vanity, or caprice, or mere indolence? A thousand such questions forced themselves upon him, and the answers were vague, flimsy, and unsatisfactory. How circumspect had been his personal bearing in a situation so momentous? How careful had he shewn himself in the choice of his associates? What opinion would have been formed of his conduct by an impartial spectator? And what even would have been the judgment of a Being able to penetrate through the maze of circumstance and coincidence which envelope the actions of men, and to whom darkness itself is as noon-day?

In the midst of this rigid self-examination Helen's letter arrived. Her "farewell!" descended like a death-blow upon his heart. It was the answer to his questions—the natural result of his own conduct—an inevitable link in the chain of the events of his history. At times a sudden and rebellious feeling would start up in his bosom, and striking his hand furiously upon his forehead, he would exclaim—"What have I done to deserve this?" then flying to the worst refuge of human weakness,—"It is my fate! it is my fate!" he would cry, covering his eyes with his hands, and throwing himself back in his chair, as if overwhelmed and annihilated.

There is something at once pleasing and horrible to the

feeble mind of man in the idea of being carried on, on the rushing stream of destiny, with the wildness of a straw dancing on some headlong river, and yet its lightest or most extravagant motion under the controul and direction of those unerring powers which wield the universe. This undefinable feeling, with all its darkness, and mystery, and dread, was not long of resolving, in the mind which received it, into something more applicable to the phenomena of human life, and more germane to the other feelings of human nature. Gathering around him like a mantle the gloom which was above and about him—fortifying himself with his very despair, William stood in the middle of his little room, the very image of hopeless pride.

"She shall never know how she has wrung me!" he exclaimed—"Incapable as she is alike of pity and error, I shall at least spare myself her contempt!" Following, if not mingling, with this resolution, there arose that loftier and better train which, in minds capable of receiving them in such circumstances, are so often the pioneers of fame. His pale cheek flushed; his dull eye lightened; visions of glory swam before his sight—of glory attained by moral courage, by self-denial, by study, by devoted industry; and to which the rugged and precipitous steps were hunger, and thirst, and poverty, and patient suffering.

"She may yet regret her injustice!" he exclaimed, with a softened voice; but, at the moment, a blush crossed his young brow, as the passing idea disclosed that the foundations of this poetical resolve—

"That column of true majesty is man"—

rested on mere human weakness, and still lingering love. A restless and feverish night was followed by a languid and miserable day. Another, and another, and another passed on. His plans became like dreams, without substance or definite shape; his thoughts, one by one, were forgotten; his temper was captious, his voice querulous; and the low fever which preyed upon his vitals, was soon mistaken for an indication of

the want of that talent and energy, which, to a poor and friendless adventurer, are the very basis of hope. The people with whom he lodged became every day more remiss in their attention, as every day their prospects of ultimate remuneration seemed more remote. His meals were unsuitable and irregular; his apartment was neglected; and, at length, his pale and ghastly appearance induced his benevolent hosts to think of consulting—not the physician—but the overseers of the parish. At this period the door was opened, and, for the first time, one of his London associates made his appearance as a visitor.

"You are unwell," said Burnet, in his usual monotone—"Yes, very unwell. I thought how it would be—few constitutions could stand the sort of life which must be led by a companion of Wigwam. In case of your death, you would like me, I suppose, to write to your mother? However, there is time enough to think of that; you will live, no doubt, as long as you can—I myself would do the same!"

"I live," replied the invalid, "not because I can, but because I must. What is there to attach me to life?"

"Very true; you are a lucky fellow. Your mother has an income in dependent of your exertions; you have no wife—no children—yes, you are a lucky fellow, you can afford to die—but you will live for all that."

"I cannot live without food; food cannot be obtained except in exchange for money or labour; neither of these can I give—and therefore—"

"Rare syllogism! But I deny a part of the premises, and therefore hold the *igitur* to be, as we lawyers say, a *non sequitur*. Money is merely the representative of other property, and when the principal is present you may dispense with the *locum tenens*. That trunk for instance contains more clothes than you can carry on your back at one moment; above your mantel-piece there hangs a pair of pistols, for

which till your case becomes more desperate you can have little use; and below these, a wretched daub—some atrocious caricature of a face which it would be libellous to call human—acts the foil to a frame not inelegant nor uncostly.—These articles are neither money nor labour, and yet they will purchase both."

"The daub, Mr. Burnet," said the invalid, with some heat, "I would not part with for all your legal knowledge thrown into one bundle; and indeed if I may judge of the value of your other acquisitions by your taste in the fine arts, they would hardly be a fair equivalent for the bit of gold leaf which covers the frame of that drawing."

"Well, well," said Burnet, with a cold smile, "let us talk of the wardrobe."

"These trifles I have already thought of selling; but," and William added hesitatingly, "just suppose that I recover from this illness—the plight I should have to stalk about the world in would be rather an awkward one."

"You have *not* thought of selling them," replied Burnet calmly, "you are not such a fool. You have not meddled so long with the little miseries of your neighbours to be ignorant that you may lend them for as much as you could sell them." William blushed.

"Ay, ay," said Burnet, understanding the feeling, "you will soon get over all that. Your course is clear—you may writhe as you please—you may shut your eyes—you may fancy you are walking backwards; but on you will go till your head raps against the tombstone."

"What *is* my course?" cried the invalid—"speak, prophet of evil!"

"Prophet of nonsense!" said Burnet coldly. "You will not die this bout: you are too young and strong; you are buoyed up with too many hopes; your life is anchored with

too many pleasant recollections. No, no, you will not die this bout. You will lend your wardrobe, piece by piece, to the pawnbroker who does not want it, and he in return will lend his money, piece by piece, to you who do. When you are able to go to work again you will in due time release a part of your property;—and thus you will do very well, rich and poor, well and ill clad alternately, for some years more.—You will perhaps in the interim get married: your love will turn out a—wife; some of your children will die in the measles; you will work much, and eat, if not drink, sparingly:—and thus you will do very well—very well indeed—for some years more."

"And then?" asked William with a gasp, as Burnet quietly finished his sentence.

"Inquire some time hence," replied the law-writer; "I speak of things as I find them. I see with my own eyes—I am no theorist, not I. You would not like, I fancy," continued Burnet, while he turned out the contents of the trunk, and made up a small bundle. "You would not like, I fancy, to undertake this affair yourself? You would shrink, I'll warrant me, under the mean and treacherous eye of the descendant of the Lombard bankers, like a thief offering his stolen goods to a receiver whom he suspected to be honest. It would never enter your head to think that you were lending the reptile property in exchange for his money, and that the shame—if any shame can be supposed to attach to a transaction which has so splendid an antiquity to recommend it—ought to be on his side rather than your's." Burnet had nearly reached the middle of the stairs on his embassy when he met with an interruption; and William, who had not yet shut the door of his room, listened with intense mortification to a dialogue between him and the lady of the house, who strongly insisted on her right to prohibit the export of her lodger's property before his bill was paid. Burnet at length frankly confessed the nature of his mission, assuring her that a part of the proceeds was intended for her-

self; and the good woman, softening immediately, not only assisted him to refold the packet, which indeed had fallen asunder owing to the vehement manner in which she at first suited the action to the word, but kindly counselled him as to the amount it would be proper to demand. Before the conversation had taken this friendly turn, William, boiling with shame and indignation had descended the stairs.

"I thank you, Mr. Burnet," said he, for the trouble you have taken; "but I am now well enough to go on my own errands." Burnet followed him in silence to his room, and having shut the door, inquired with a mysterious look, whether he would really venture out before Sunday?

"Why not?" said William, fiercely, still chafing with his late exposure.

"Because, I apprehend, there are sharks abroad. An elderly man, looking as like a creditor as he could stare, called on me some time ago, and made very queer inquiries about your affairs."

"Oh—and you told him I had refused employment on the plea of illness?"

"I told him the simple truth," said Burnet, "only concealing the affair of the night before—drunkenness, you know, being an aggravation of an offence in the eye of the law."

"And how did he receive the information?"

"He groaned to the very bowels, and remarked, as if to himself, that he had seen you that very morning at the fire in the city, arm in arm with one of the most abandoned profligates about town, and looking as well and as happy as ever." It was now William's turn to groan; and indeed for some moments he stared so wildly that his friend began to think the fever was at work in his brain.

"I am in the toils—I am in the toils!" cried the unhappy

man; "I am beset like a wild beast; and which ever way I turn, there is a snare and a hunter!"

"God forbid!" exclaimed Burnet, "surely matters are not so bad with you as that. I am almost afraid you have been a sad boy, however; but let us all live as long as we can—it is a maxim of nature;" and he hurried away again on his mission without being even observed by his distracted employer. That same night William received the following elegant epistle:—

*Three Puncheons*, 10 *o'Clock.*

"Dear Bill,

"'Ware hawk! There has been a rum-looking customer waiting here for you all the evening. He wears a brown coat, and a brown cane, and does not look like a true man, as he neither drinks nor smokes. He is very anxious to learn where you hang out,—but mum's the word with,

"Thine, "WIGWAM."

On reading these lines a curse escaped from William's lips, which startled him both by its vulgarity and impiety.

"What fiend is this," he exclaimed, "Who haunts me so pertinaciously—who dogs my footsteps, pries into my actions, and distorts my misfortunes into follies, and my follies into crimes? Shall I meet and confront him—expose the impudence of his truths, and the baseness of his falsehoods; and drive him from my presence with insult and reproach? Or rather shall I not fly from him, and from all to whom my ill-omened face is known, bury myself in some distant obscurity, and rise or fall unimpeded and uncared for?

After the excitement of these little events the mind of the invalid began to recover in some measure its tone, and in a few days he was able to go out of doors and resume his employment. The run of ill-luck, however, as his friend Wigwam would have said, had made a beginning, and run

it would to the end of its career. His reports seemed to have lost their novelty, or whatever other charm they possessed, in the eye of the editors; and in less than a week, poor William, notwithstanding his great industry and greater economy, was under the necessity of having recourse again to the trunk. On this occasion he was his own agent; and, his first reluctance conquered, his first feeling of generous shame wiped off, his mind adapted itself with a terrible facility to the circumstances of his situation.

For the next few weeks we will not pursue the path of his degradation.

At the end of that period Burnet visited him again, and even the composure of the law-writer was disturbed at the alteration exhibited in his appearance. A shabby black coat buttoned up to the chin, and grey trowsers, which seemed by their scanty length and width, as well as faded colour, to have served out their time long ago, exhibited, with much more precision than fashion permitted, the outline of his striking figure; while a rusty, weather-beaten hat, shoes long unacquainted with the blacking brush, and stockings neither whole nor clean, conspired to produce an air as completely vagabond as could be well imagined. The trunk was open and empty in the middle of the floor; the pistols had deserted their post above the mantle-piece; and the *daub*, minus its frame and glass, looked with a melancholy eye at the scene of desolation around. When Burnet entered, William was in the act of wrapping up a genteel frock coat in a handkerchief; and the first motion of the former, after he had cast a hasty glance round the room, was to seize hold of his arm.

"Not that, my dear fellow" said he, "any thing but that! To shove your last decent coat out of the way is absolute suicide—it is a signal of despair, which will be received with a triumphant shout by all the devils in hell."

"Why, Dick," said our adventurer, with an affected gai-

ety, "I thought you had been quite a philosopher! What signifies the shape or colour of the coat a man covers his back with?"

"It signifies little," replied Burnet, "to those happy dogs of day-labourers—those comfortable carpenters—those luxurious bricklayers, those magnificent magnanimous draymen; but to us," added he, while a bitter smile lighted up for an instant the gloomy serenity of his features, "to us who are *gentlemen*, it signifies every thing. Do, my dear boy, be persuaded; something better will turn up; you shall take another bout at copying and although I am too poor to pay you in advance, yet if a something—a nothing—can be of use for the moment——" and, after searching in his pocket, he drew forth, without eliciting a single social tinkle, and thrust into his friend's hand, a trifle which the historic muse condescends not to name. William shook the hand which contained the gift, with a wild and startling vehemence; he attempted to speak, but burst, instead into a hoarse broken laugh: then shutting his friend's fingers upon the coin, he caught up his bundle, and hurried him out of the house.

The next morning, wearied with the fruitless exertions of the preceding day, ill in health, broken in spirits, and as pennyless as before, having paid a part of his debt, William was still in bed, when he heard a knock at the door of his room. His heart beat at the sound, for every thing startled him now, and he hesitated for some moments whether he should not allow the visitor to suppose that there was nobody within. The knock, however was repeated in what seemed to the timidity of poverty and misery, to be an authoritative manner, and drawing his bed-clothes to his face in order to hide from profane eyes, not his skin, but his shirt, he cried "come in."

The face of the visitor was familiar to him; but it was some time before he could recognise, in a plain blue coat, drab trowsers, and dirty shoes and stockings, the top-booted, fur-

collared, and eye-glassed gentleman he had met at the Three-Puncheons, on the first fatal evening of this fatal visit to London. Mr. Simpkin, after saluting him with punctilious politeness, broke the subject of his visit—which was nothing else than to offer him a situation in the counting-house of Messrs. Dot and Co.

"What is that you say?" cried William bending eagerly forward on his elbow—to the grievous exposure of a remnant of dirty linen, and fixing his fierce and haggard eyes upon those of the shopman. Simpkin repeated the offer, and proceeded at some length to explain the nature and duties of the situation.

He talked, however, with out a listener.—A bright glow had at first risen into William's cheek, and his eye shone with dazzling light; but the next moment the glow died like a flame sinking in the ashes, and the light was suddenly extinguished, like a torch by a gust of wind in a stormy night. He fell back upon his pillow, with a sigh that seemed loaded with whole years of misery; and when Simpkin, at length inquired what answer he should carry back to his employers, it appeared to be with some difficulty that he comprehended the question, or remembered the object of the visit.

"I thank you," said he at last, "but the offer, kind as it is, comes too late. Yesterday I could have accepted it!" And as the circumstances of his parting with the last remnant of his wardrobe which could have rendered it at all possible for him to accept of any situation, came again bitterly home to his recollection, his voice was choked, and he pressed his hands upon his burning eyes.

"What, you are somewhat hippish, this morning?" said Simpkin, breaking at once from business, and mingling the air of the puppy with that of the shopman.—"Blame me, if these doings altogether agree with me either; but—sink the shop!—a man must spend his evenings somewhere. So you

have cut the Three Puncheons?—Well, I must be off—I am very glad you have found a better situation than *we* could offer you—very glad, upon my honour. *Au revoir!*"

"Stay, sir," said William, "will you add to your kindness by informing me to whose good offices, I am indebted for this proposal?"

"Why," replied Simpkin, hesitating, "you know every good fellow thinks himself bound to help another at a pinch, and I assure you, Mr. Nollid, the manager no sooner mentioned your name to me, than I swore you were cut out by nature for a clerk. I said you wrote a fine hand, were a surprising arithmetician, and a sober, honest and industrious young man. In short, I told fifty lies about you."

"I am much obliged—but how came the manager to be acquainted with my name?"

"Faith, I hardly know that; but just before he spoke to me, he was in conversation for some time with an elderly gentleman, with a brown coat and brown cane."

"Enough! enough! Good morning."

"Ta, ta!"

When Simpkin had shut the door, William sprung from his bed, and threw on his clothes with what he confessed to himself to be the first prudent resolution he had taken since his arrival in London; "I will see this strange being," said he, "incomprehensible alike in good and evil; I will find him out, if he be above ground! Misery, real, palpable misery such as mine, is surely enough without the horrors of imagination. I will no longer be ridden by a night-mare, or tormented, for aught I know, by a fiend!"

He first walked direct to the warehouse of Messrs. Dot and Co., where he saw the manager; but all this gentleman knew of Mr. Vesper was, that he had been introduced by a friend of the house, a linen-draper at Monmouth. Seiz-

ing the vague hint conveyed by this information, he then went successively to the different inns where the Welsh coaches arrived, and at length succeeded in discovering some clue to the object of his search.—The porter at one of the inns remembered carrying his portmanteau to a house near Charing Cross; and thither William bent his steps. Mr. Vesper had just paid his bill, and removed his luggage in a hackney-chariot.—Where? It was supposed for the purpose of returning to the country by the night-coach. William flew to one of the great coach-offices in Piccadilly, where he was absolutely certain of intercepting him if he had not already passed.

A stage-coach was at the door, and in the act of recommencing its journey; the whip flew noisily about the horses' ears; the animals struck fire with their heels from the granite stones of the street; and as the first convulsive motion of the vehicle brought it within play of the pavement lamp, the pale light streamed upon a face in the inside, which William knew to be Mr. Vesper's. The next moment the coach dashed off at full speed: and William, spent with fatigue, anxiety, and illness, only prevented himself from falling by clinging to the lamp-post.

It was late before he reached his lodgings, and his knock for admittance was answered from the parlour-window.

"I did not expect you back," said the mistress of the house, "nor indeed do I think you intended, in the morning to return; for I see you have removed every article of your property, down even to an old bible which lay on your mantelpiece, with the exception of a trumpery picture, no doubt of some trumpery slut, who seemed to mock me from the wall as I went in to clean the room for another lodger." William hugged the bible on which his coat was closely buttoned, and thanked God inwardly for the instinct which had preserved it."

"I did not intend," said he, "to remove in your debt; God

knows I would have paid you if I could, and that I still will when I can. Give me only one night more—it is all I ask or will accept."

"The room is let," replied the woman, roughly, "and the lodger asleep in his bed long ago."

"Then give me, at least, that little portrait—it can be of no use to you." She shut down the window. William rapped loudly on the glass with his knuckles; and the landlady, throwing it open again, exclaimed in a fury—

"Dare, sirrah, to disturb my house in that manner once more, and I will give you in charge to the watch." She then shut down the window with violence, but not before William had inserted his hand between. The blood spouted from the crushed fingers; but with the other hand he held up a shilling before the window, and with a gentle though earnest voice, entreated her to accept of it in exchange for the portrait.

"Do take it," said he, "it is my last, or I would offer more; surely that little bit of paper cannot, to any one but me, be worth a shilling."

The landlady relented. She handed him the portrait; nay, she even hesitated for a moment before accepting the money. Had it been only eleven pence humanity might have triumphed; but the devil bid another penny more, and she clutched the bait. As the window closed for the last time.—

"There was a friend of yours here to-day; she said in a softened tone, "a gentleman with a brown coat and a brown cane; make your peace with him, if you wish to do well in the world.

William, as he pressed his bible with one hand, and his tiny portrait with the other, walked on for some time, more with the air of a conqueror in a Roman triumph, than with that of a homeless, and friendless wretch in the streets of a mighty city.

It was nearly twelve o'clock, the public-houses had already emptied their lawful contents into the vast thoroughfares of population; the shops were shut, with the exception here and there of an avaricious pastry-cook's, which still gaped upon the street for the purpose of tempting stragglers on their way home from the playhouses; the customary noises of evening had died away, all but now and then a drunken shout, or the rattle of a hackney-coach, or the hoarse voice of a watchman bawling the hour. By and bye, the theatres flung their gushing volumes into the stream, which gave token of the addition to the furthest corners of the metropolis. Men and women, boys, girls, and children flowed rapidly along; some absorbed as they passed into the ducts and creeks which opened by their side, and others disappearing in the gloom before. The eager remark, the abrupt question, the recollected laugh, echoed on all sides; and when the crowd gradually melted away, and their voices died in the distance, the loneliness of the desert street seemed strange and startling. The silence was now only broken at long intervals by the scream of the female night-wanderer, driven by intoxication and despair to remonstrate with the sullen guardian of the hour; but elsewhere the drowsy voices of the watchmen themselves seemed to add to the calmness of the scene.

'Imposing silence with a stilly sound.

As William turned into Bridge Street by the Obelisk at Fleet Market, he heard a singular cry, which even his practised ear was unable to syllable into any of the customary sounds of a metropolitan night. A figure in white came rushing along the pavement, uttering a short, shrill, definite scream, repeated in rapid yet regular succession. As she approached he could see that she was dressed in the extreme of fantastic finery, and that her wild and bacchanal air denoted a profession of shame. "Lost! lost! lost!" was her cry as she ran,—"Lost! lost! lost!" she shrieked more wildly in William's ears, as she swept past him like a spirit. Shocked and heart stricken, he stood still, and gazed after the

phantom ; and when her form had melted into the darkness, and the voice of the lost one had fallen for the last time upon his heart, it was with a gasp of unutterable relief he pursued his aimless journey.

On the neighbouring bridge he stood for a while, contemplating instinctively the imposing scene before him. No sensible perception however, of beauty, or sublimity, at first entered his mind. He seemed to be awakened gradually from a dream, of which he remembered not the form or meaning, by the moon breaking from the clouds, which had till now enveloped her, and calling out from the chaos of darkness the elements of a magnificent city. The proud dome of St. Paul's raised its head supreme amidst the mass of buildings, while meaner spires, countless in number, and various in form and character, were scattered around. To the west the more definite part of the view was bounded by Waterloo bridge which threw its superb length, straight as an arrow, over the wide and glittering river ; and beside it Somerset House, rising with its palace-walls, from the water's edge, seemed a building created and existing only in the fancy of a painter.

On the north, a forest of dark houses burthened the earth as far as the eye could reach, oppressing the imagination by their multitude, and their close and compact array: on the south, the line of Blackfriars Road extended its rows of bright lamps with mathematical nicety, to such a distance, that it seemed to terminate in a point; and to the east, the cast-iron bridge bestriding the broad stream, like a giant, seemed to guard the tract beyond from view, into which nevertheless, the eye could penetrate, although dimly, as in a dream, through darker clouds and shadows, which it learnt by its past experience to shape into houses, and towers, and spires. Every thing was vast and mighty and indefinite. No grasp was afforded to the mind of even a part of the picture. The buildings melted into other buildings ; the streets were absorbed into other streets; and the boundary line of the whole was hidden in darkness. In darkness arose the mighty volume of waters which rolled in silence through the si-

lent city; and in thick darkness its course was lost and swallowed up.

William gazed with a feeling of littleness, which at last diverged into absolute terror. He forgot that he was himself an individual of that species of insects which had created the wonders around him! By and bye the moon withdrew her light as suddenly as it had been given; and the night-wind, which seemed to have been charmed to rest by her beauty, came forth with a wild and wailing cry. Heavily the moaning gusts swept along the bridge, and cold, cold was their breath upon the wanderer, who stood there in silence and darkness. William turned shivering away into the thicker houses of the city, but his chilled limbs were hardly able to perform their functions.

While passing through St. Paul's Church Yard, where the winds are never still, the icy blast seemed to cut into his very heart, and he felt a momentary relief in escaping into Cheapside, from the dark cold shadow of the cathedral. Soon the Mansion-house was at his back, the palace of the City kings; Lombard Street on his right, the mistress of the city purse; the Bank on his left, at once the agent and comptroller of the government of the empire; and before him, the Royal Exchange the grand rendezvous of the intercourse of the world. In that dead and lonely hour, when the interruptions of business, and the thousand suggestions of self were still, the associations connected with these objects in the imagination of an Englishman arose in all their strength and grandeur; and it was with a proud step and a swelling heart that the poor, friendless, moneyless, homeless youth strode up the slight ascent of Cornhill. The excitement had hardly abated when, in Leadenhall Street, the palace of the merchant-kings of half a continent stood before him; the depository of the destinies of hundreds of millions of their fellow-men—grand, and terrible, and lovely, in its associations with power and crime, and holy mercy—with all that is brightest and meanest in the human character, and all that is vast and magnificent in the human history.

The re-action in his feelings however was almost instantaneous. The cold became more intense, his threadbare clothing felt thinner, his limbs grew heavy with fatigue, and want of food, although without the sensation of hunger, weighed down his heart. Hardly conscious of the circumstance of motion, he traversed Aldgate, and passing through some streets to the right, saw the blood-stained towers of Julius* before him, as mean and impotent in their aspect as they are grand and mighty in history. When turning again to the right, he passed into Thames Street, where, in the day-time, the voice cannot be heard for the roar of waggons, the silence by contrast seemed strange and awful. At the Custom house, the grand portal of the commerce of half the world, a solitary sentinel slumbered on his post; and when he had nearly reached, at right angles, the great artery which communicates between the heart of the city and London Bridge, the place seemed so favourable for a moment's repose, that he was tempted to rest his trembling limbs on a window-seat.

The change of feeling for the instant, was delicious. His eyes began to close, and a forgetfulness of immediate misery stole softly over his senses; when a watchman, who had been concealed in the shadow on the opposite side, crossed over and rapping the pavement with his cudgel till the streets rung again, ordered him to "move on."

"My good fellow," said William faintly, "I am doing no harm."

"That is no business of mine," replied the functionary: "you have no right to sleep in the open air; and if I find you transgressing the law within my beat, why, I must take you up for a rogue and a vagabond, that's all." William moved on.

He turned down by London Bridge; and unconscious of

* The Tower.

any particular feeling or purpose, found himself standing on the middle arch, and gazing upon the dark surges tumbling below. The moon was entirely hidden beneath the dense clouds which hurried across the sky; and the wind, sweeping in longer gusts, wailed over the waters like a voice of lamentation and despair. The wanderer stept upon the ledge of the parapet, and leaning upon his elbows, looked down into the gulf. A sensation of fierce joy first attacked his mind as a thousand wild and mysterious sounds rose upon his ear from where the winds and headlong waters rushed through the arch below. He felt that he smiled bitterly at the darkness and strife; and, half controlled by a nervous affection, half in mockery of his own despair, he at length mingled his voice with that of the night in a hoarse and hollow laugh. Then startled by the sound he had himself produced, which, as the gust at intervals died moaning away, seemed to issue from lips not his own, he paused in expectation and terror.

Recalled to himself, he was met by a feeling partaking in a scarcely less degree of the horrible. All within was dark—darker than all without; all within was tumult—more tumultuous than all without. But no gleam of light illumined the darkness of his soul; no bright and lovely moon struggled with the clouds of his destiny; no sinking of the voice of the moral storm was heard. Was a continuation then, of the analogy impossible? No, There was hope on one side, and death on the other. In vain he looked round for that saving light; in vain he examined the whole circle of his horizon. To-morrow he would be as wretched and forlorn a being as to-night, and the morsel of food which chance or charity might present to his hunger, like the cordials of the Inquisition, would only preserve his life for new sufferings. The other alternative—death! But the daring and dreadful idea which rose into his mind was choked by a feeling of religious horror, and he only formed the wish without planning the deed. He even implored his Maker to take again the breath he had given; he madly commanded his minis-

ters to execute decrees that had not passed; he called upon the winds to sweep him from the bridge; and upon the waves to hide in their dark bosoms his degradation and his despair.

His reason tottered; his brain swam round; a thousand strange voices muttered, and hissed, and shrieked, and groaned in his ear; a thousand horrible faces grinned and mocked and chattered before his eyes. A maniac rage took possession of his heart, and he tore and buffeted the empty air. Farther and farther he leaned over the parapet, grasping and springing at his phantom foes; but some obstacle, some pressure, like that which is felt in the night mare, still preserved him from losing his balance. At every tug it tugged the fiercer; at every plunge it pierced into his side; and William, at length, putting down his hand to effect his release, found that Helen's Bible, over which his coat was buttoned, was caught in a broken part of the stone.

His face drooped upon his hands; the fountain of his heart was broken up, and his phrenzy wept itself away. Long he wept, long he reflected, long he prayed, without altering his position; and when at length he raised his head the bright moon had risen like a spirit from her grave of clouds, and William blessed aloud the omen and Him who sent it. On descending to the pavement he drew forth the talisman of love; cold and fatigue had departed from his limbs, as well as sorrow and despair from his heart; and he sat down on one of the stone seats of the bridge, and opened the holy book to read it by the moonlight. What *sortes* have met his enlarging eyes? What text of wonder has struck upon his heart? Breathless and immoveable, he sat for some minutes gazing upon the blessed page; and then slowly lifted up at arm's length, a loose paper, as if to raise it nearer the light of the starry lamp—it was a fifty pound bank note.

## CHAPTER. IX.

### *The Adversary Enters.*

Will none disclose the secret?
——————————Do the strict laws
Of your society forbid your speaking
Upon a point so nice? I'll ask no more,
Sullen, like lamps in sepulchres, your shine
Enlightens but yourselves. Well—'tis no matter:
A very little time will clear up all,
And make us learn'd as you are, and as close.

BLAIR.

"My dear friend," wrote Mr. Vesper to the Curate, "have patience for a little while longer, and we shall open the back gammon table again. You were perfectly right; boys and girls are troublesome things to play with—but more especially the former." A little while elapsed, however, and then a little while longer, and still Mr. Vesper was busy with his game of life, where the moves were so difficult, and the event so desperate.

It is plain, thought he, that the character of this young man has been altogether misunderstood, even by himself. The vulgar phrase of "coming into the world," as applied to the plunging of a youth into the great reservoir of society, is metaphorically correct.—His eyes and ears are opened for the first time; he gasps in a new atmosphere; and his moral being acquires new attributes, and is governed by new laws. Happy is the infant—if to live is to be happy—whose constitution is so strong as to receive the shock of being born without

destruction; whose lungs can inhale, without suffocation, the gross air of our earth; and whose awakened functions can adapt themselves without injury to the new and trying circumstances in which they are placed! Happy the young man whose moral constitution is so perfect as to withstand the trial unshaken of "coming into the world"—whose principles are able to remain steady amidst the whirl of life—whose soul can extract a wholesome nutriment even from the poisonous atmosphere of sin!

While making those allowances, however, for human weakness, which are only refused by the blaspheming bigot who distorts, not only the spirit, but the express words and actions of his Master—while acknowledging, to use his own words, that "with divine assistance, the blind might be made to see, and the cripple to walk, and the withered arm to stretch forth," he persuaded himself that he had other duties not less important to perform.

"It is not impossible," said he, "that he may yet turn out a fine young man—would I could say not improbable! but in the mean time my poor Helen's life must not be suffered to run away in a dream. God forbid that I should sunder two such beings on the trial of a few days; but it is necessary to prepare her for what perhaps may be the event. Let me not cast down the image in her pure and holy heart, but let me teach her at least to regard it without the idolatry which invests with attributes almost divine what may turn out to be a cold and worthless stone."

His communication was not made abruptly. Many conversations took place beforehand; and, not satisfied with the masonic sign which introduces the good and the devout to each other, he probed deeply into the recesses of her character. Decision he found to be the most striking trait; and he even acknowledged, that if there was any thing at all in her which deviated in the slightest degree from the amiable and the truly feminine, it was the external characteristic of this quality.

Helen, in fact, had been so long her own mistress that she was a woman in mind while yet a child in years. Owing to the ill health of her mother, almost ever since her unhappy marriage, she had been the manager and organ of the family, at an age when other girls are busy with their baby-houses; and at those years when the young woman, clinging to the arm of a parent, looks timidly round upon the world of society, our fair orphan stood intrepid and alone, providing by her own labour the necessaries and even comforts of life, and regarding its luxuries with indifference if not contempt. Her manner thus must be supposed to have expressed a certain degree of self-dependence; and this, taken conjointly with the extreme youthfulness of her appearance, may have seemed unnatural, and, therefore, somewhat unbecoming in the eyes of a stranger to her history.

Yes, thought Mr. Vesper, after his examination was over, I may act freely here, without the fear either of overturning her own well grounded tranquillity, or of doing a cruel injustice to her lover. She will join with me calmly in inquiring into his conduct, and reasoning on its principles and results; and when our experiments have become numerous enough to afford materials on which to build a decision, she will either separate her fate at once from that of a being marked out for destruction, or, in an union in which the wishes of her heart receive the sanction of her judgment, she will enjoy a happiness as complete as this world can afford. So reasoned the male philosopher; and he forthwith disclosed his secret to the female one.

Helen grew paler and paler as the discourse proceeded; and at length, when she sat, faint, breathless, and bloodless, like a statue of white marble, her friend began to think that he had committed some error in ratiocination. When he arrived, however, at that passage in his disclosure in which he related that he had heard her own name bandied by one of the base and profligate associates of her lover, her bosom throbbed quickly and wildly, her eye lightened, and the blood rushed

in a torrent into her face. These various signs of emotion, however, lasted only while Mr. Vesper was speaking. When he concluded, they had passed away like clouds flitting across the moon. She then calmly but earnestly investigated what she had heard, questioning him as to the details, and suggesting possibilities of exaggeration or mistake; and finally entreated him, "for Mrs. Clive's sake," to return instantly to London, and draw her unhappy son from the perdition into which he was sinking. The letter which concludes the eighth chapter of this history, was despatched on the following morning. Some people may think it betrays a little inconsistence with her present manner and language; but we, who are learned in the mysteries of human nature, think no such thing.

When Mr. Vesper reached London, he had still more difficulty than at first in finding his *protegee*. William's residence was unknown at the Three Puncheons; and although his pursuer attended there on several successive nights, he did not make his appearance. Many of the company, indeed, knew him, or pretended to know him, by description; and not a few were so polite as to mention some other houses—situated, generally at several miles distance—where he was to be found in the evening. Mr. Vesper, after many fruitless walks and rides, discovered that, in common parlance, he was *hoaxed* by these informants, and determined therefore to conclude his acquaintanceship with the Three Puncheons and its witty frequenters with a single other visit.

On this occasion, while repeating pertinaciously his inquiries, a person whom he had never seen before instantly stept up to him, and offered to become his agent in the discovery. An easy business-like address, and considerable sincerity of manner, induced Mr. Vesper to question him as to his means and probability of success; and Mr. Wilkins, the accomodating genius whom we have before fallen in with, in the same room, entered with prolix plausibility into an explanation.

"The gentleman you say, sir," said he," is Welsh; very well; I know the residence of another gentleman from the

principality—one Burnet, a law-writer; and Welshmen, I have observed, stand together like the blades of a leek.—There are also several houses of public entertainment, where you will be sure to meet with a Welshman if he is above ground. There is, for instance, the Hole in the Wall, justly celebrated for its toasted cheese, and also another house, but of rather a lower grade, where the same Runic aliment is devoured cold, with raw onions. We have also the Barley Mow, incomparably the best in London for its Welsh ale, which, indeed, in the facetious reports of Mr. Wigwam, a gentleman of newspaper fame who frequents this house, except in his short interval of sobriety, has received the appellation of 'Taffy's Elixir.'

"I am inclined to think, sir," interrupted Mr. Vesper, "that your first suggestion is the best; and, at all events, it would be worth while calling on Mr. Burnet before giving yourself further trouble."

"No trouble at all, sir—none in the world; but I make it a point to attend religiously to the instructions with which I am honoured;" and drawing forth his book and pen, he entered the commission with great formality.—"The expense will be trifling," added he," coach-hire—letters—time—trouble. O, quite a trifle."

"I would prefer," said Mr. Vesper, cautiously, "instead of paying you a trifle for your exertions, engaging to double or treble the sum on your bringing me face to face with Mr. Clive."

"Is he above ground, my dear sir?" enquired the agent with great delight.

"I have reason to know," replied Mr. Vesper, "humanly speaking, that he is in London at this moment. This is my name and address; and unless you are particularly unreasonable, I believe you will not consider that your trouble has been thrown away." Wilkins had no sooner cast his eye upon the card, than he started and changed colour; then

throwing a deep but hasty glance at Mr. Vesper's face, he arose suddenly from his chair, and applying his hand to his watchless fob, declared that he had not another moment to spare. "Your business shall be attended to," said he, "good night!" and catching up his hat, he darted out of the room.

Mr. Vesper experienced an emotion of alarm, but scarcely of surprise, for he had himself been attracted by something peculiar in the man's appearance; and when he vanished so abruptly he felt as if relieved from the presence of some phantom face which had haunted him in a dream. While musing on the singularity of the circumstance, a sudden light darted through his brain, and striking his hands together—"My God!" he exclaimed almost aloud, "that was my wretched brother's associate, the villain Watson!" To his eager inquiries, the company answered to a man, that they knew him as well as the gas-light. "He is a tea-dealer," said one; "no—a situation agent," said a second; "rather a wine or a coal merchant, I should think," said a third; "not at all—he is a tailor," insisted a fourth; but they all agreed in their ignorance of his place of abode, and of the particular house he *used*, if indeed he used any in particular at all. The landlord declared that all he knew of his profession was, that Wilkins had lately paid him by a cart of lime for a small drinking bill he had run up, receiving the balance in old puncheon staves; and another person declared, that only the other week he had been in treaty with this universal dealer for a box of Havanna cigars and a side of bacon.

In the feelings which this unexpected rencontre revived, Mr. Vesper almost forgot for several weeks the ostensible object of his visit to London. If any man living could throw light upon the fate of his brother's family, it was Wilkins! His yearnings after those only relations recommenced; and the "lady with the long dark hair," and the "child, with its innocent eyes," began once more to haunt his dreams.—Wilkins, however, had vanished, as traceless as a spirit; and to tempt by further bribes in advertisements a man who

must have already refused so much, was useless. Mr. Vesper, therefore, at length left the affair in the hands of Providence, and turned his thoughts to those who were to supply the place of friends and family.

Although he conceived that Wilkins would have been a fitter person to deal with such a man as he imagined Burnet, from his cold and gloomy manner, to be, yet since this mysterious agent had no doubt thrown up his commission, he ventured to undertake the task himself of wresting from the reserve or design of the law-writer his knowledge of William and his place of abode. He found Burnet sitting at the fireside with his wife and children, hanging over a few dying embers. The implements of his occupation were on the table, but no law paper, or other symptom of actual business, visible; and Mrs. Burnet's hands were rested idly on her knees, while her eyes were fixed with a vacant stare upon the almost cold grate. An air of poverty, amounting to absolute want, reigned throughout the apartment; and the children, leaning their heads round their mother's chair, with neglected dress, and faces channelled with tears, seemed to have cried themselves to sleep. Mr. Vesper was powerfully moved with this scene of desolation, and the rather that for it seemed but too well to account for the air of coldness and selfishness which had prejudiced him against Burnet. Can this be the man, thought he, who furnishes others with employment, and who thinks himself entitled to feel indignant at their neglect of his orders? The law-writer seemed to hesitate for some moments whether he should, or should not, take the trouble of rising to receive his visitor; but apparently resolving to indemnify himself in another way for the civility, he at length got up.

"Well," said he, "you have come, I suppose, to ask me whether Mr. Clive has now accepted employment, and what sum of his I may happen to have in my hands. Is it not so?"

"I confess," replied the visitor, "that I should feel interested in the reply to those questions: but my purpose in coming here was simply to ask, whether you can now furnish me with the young gentleman's address; and to offer you—I trust I do not offend—a compensation for the trouble." At these words the young wife raised her head for the first time, so suddenly, as to draw forth a sleepy moan from the children, and fixed an eager gaze upon her husband's face. Burnet answered her with a furious look, and turning with flashing eyes to Mr. Vesper, seemed about to give vent to a burst of indignation; but the next moment his cheek resumed its sallow hue, his lip trembled, and he pointed with a silent gesture of grief and aversion to the door, and turning his back upon his visitor, sat down.

"I perceive that I have offended you," said Mr. Vesper, gently, "and yet I can hardly conceive how. I know little about the punctilios of pride or vanity—I am a plain man, Mr. Burnet, and have been accustomed, like yourself, to work for my living."

"You are *not* a plain man," replied Burnet, with his usual dogmatical abruptness; "you are a man so disguised in the artifices of society; so covered with the incrustations of wordly interest, that nature herself would not know her own handiwork. The last time you were here, when you saw that I had work to do, and that my family had bread to eat, you did not dare to offer me a bribe to betray my friend; but now, when you find poverty—nay, hunger in the room, and read impatience of suffering in the eyes of my wife——"

"Nay, Richard," interrupted Mrs. Burnet, in a hollow whisper, as she stole her hand round the table, and took hold of his—"you know it was for the children?" Burnet, replying with a look of self-reproach, as he secretly pressed her hand, continued—

"If you were really a plain man, I would not hesitate to

trust you with William Clive's address. You would see him as destitute and desperate a wretch, as can be found within the bills of mortality."

"And why in the name of heaven, will you hide him from me? Am I a wolf—"

"If you were all wolf," said Burnet, coolly, "I should not mind, for wolves will not fasten on the throat they cannot prey upon: but the English creditor mingles so marvellous a portion of the ass with the fiercer animal, that a prudent man will not expose to his stupidity what he might safely trust to his blood thirstiness."

Mr. Vesper had considerable difficulty in removing the impression which the mind of the half-lawyer had received with regard to his business with William; but when at length he succeeded in persuading him that he was in reality an old friend of the family, and sought out the young man from motives of the kindest solicitude, Burnet seized him by the arm, and hurried him out of the room.

"Fly," said he, "fly for God's sake! There is his address, to-night you can save him—to-morrow night may be too late!"

"And you!" said Mr. Vesper, hesitating, as he shook him warmly by the hand—

O, I," replied the law-writer,—"I am used to it; I am no worse off now, than I have been before, and shall be again:" and as he spoke, he fixed his glassy eye upon vacancy, while the light of the slender candle, with which he showed his visitor down stairs, fell dimly on a brow of twenty-five, where care and dejection had placed the marks of at least middle life.

"Go—go," continued he, starting—"take care that at all events you allow not to-morrow forenoon to pass without seeing him.—Beware of the striking of the twelfth hour.

His first trial is over, thought Mr. Vesper, as he walked along the street; he has been weighed in the balance and this time found wanting. His money is spent, and his health no doubt impaired; and he sees the hopes of the vicious dissolving away, and want rushing down upon him like an armed man. The hour is propitious; to-morrow morning it shall be put into his power to live—not in idleness, however, not like a *gentleman's son*, as his silly mother would say—but by patient, honest and laborious industry. The duration of the experiment will depend upon his own conduct—and then we shall see.

The next morning considerable speculation was excited in the establishmeut of Messrs. Dot and Co., by the appearance of a brown-coated and brown-caned elderly gentleman—evidently no customer—stalking through the covered streets and squares of their city of haberdashery. When Simpkin had been dispatched on his errand, the Manager left Mr. Vesper to his fate, and our philosopher, surprised, and for some time amused by the scene before him, had abundant leisure to gratify his curiosity.

The shop extended its narrow length to a vast distance from the street, and was furnished with two parallel counters, running from end to end; behind which ministered numerous genteel and pretty-looking young females, assisted in smaller numbers by the compeers of Simpkin. The whole area between the counters was crowded with customers of both sexes and every rank; and a degree of confusion prevailed, which struck Mr. Vesper at first as being unbusiness like. His eye, however, had not been long accustomed to the spectacle, when the confusion seemed to disappear, and a surpassing regularity to be the result of sounds and motions apparently so heterogeneous.

Wandering to the middle of the area, he perceived an opening to the left, leading apparently to an inner shop, and following some persons who were conducted by one of the young men, he found himself in a narrow passage, wall-

ed with boxes and packages of all kinds. A counter extended to the right, strewed with haberdashery, and a single warehouseman behind it was too busy with his occupation to raise his eyes to look at the passer-by. At the end of this counter were two dark and dismal little dungeons, into the doors of which Mr. Vesper, whose alarm was mastered by curiosity, popped his head for a moment. These were the counting-houses—the engine-rooms, on which the whole cumbrous system of operation depended; and the machinery consisted of some half a dozen sallow-looking young men, bending over the desks with the most phthisical devotion, and in profound silence. Turning to the right, he found himself in a territory where the stable commodity was hose; but as the stocking king threw a glance of inquiry at the unauthorized adventurer, he turned away into what seemed to be a mighty continent, classed into kingdoms by arbitrary lines, unknown to the geography of nature.

Here were seen the natives staggering under loads that would have foundered an Irish porter, and wandering to and fro in the most confused regularity imaginable. Immense bales and boxes cumbered the ground; and the faint light of day wandering among silks and stuffs of every possible description, was repaid for its trouble in insinuating itself into these regions of gorgeous mystery, by being enriched with a thousand various and dazzling hues. Far to the right, in the meridian, as it appeared, of the shop, a glimpse was caught of furs, feathers, flowers, and other gay and glorious things, and flitting in the midst, appeared some female forms of corresponding elegance and beauty; but the traveller, turning to the left, continued his progress till the near view of the further wall made him congratulate himself on having achieved the exploratory adventure.

On approaching nearer, however, a confused noise assailed his ears, and presently a cavern yawned at his right hand, filled with moving figures, and wheeled carriages drawn by men, and loaded with bales and boxes. On either side of the

long but narrow excavation, a line of clerks were seated in successive boxes, writing with almost inconceivable rapidity, for their labour appeared to be original composition, not copying. Ever and anon the monosyllable "Done!" broke from their lips, but not one of them stirred for all that, or so much as lifted his pen. When Mr. Vesper's ear became in some measure accustomed to the din, he discovered that the further end of the vista sundry voices were occupied in communicating with these admirable machines; and when at length he reached the termination, he found that numerous waggons without were emptying their contents at this landing dock On emerging into the street, all was *terra incognita;* and when he inquired, in some alarm, for the establishment of Messrs. Dot and Co. he was directed to another street apparently at a considerable distance. He at length reached the shop-door in safety, where he found Simpkin in the act of entering.

"Well, sir," said Mr. Vesper, "you have found Mr. Clive? You shake your head—Is he out?"

"No, sir, he is in."

"And what answer has he given to the offer?"

"Oh, much obliged of course—but he has been in since yesterday."

"In! What do you mean? He has mistaken the message!" And Mr. Vesper's heart quaked as St. Giles's clock struck twelve.

"Why I mean, of course," said Simpkin, "that he had already found a situation, and is, therefore, able to give up his claims upon the Refuge for the Destitute." Mr. Vesper, not aware that this was a slang term for the house of Messrs. Dot and Co., shuddered at the extent of his *protegee's* sufferings. On enquiring into the nature of the situation he had obtained, the shopman declared he knew nothing about it; adding that Mr. Clive was in bed when he called, and "excessive hippish." "In bed! that looked ill. But, perhaps, he had too

good reason?" Simkin smiled, and holding his head with both his hands, and mimicking the woeful haggard look of a man after a debauch, vanished into the shop.

Mr. Vesper, vexed and surprised, walked immediately to William's lodgings. Surely the devil himself, thought he, must assist in a visible and tangible manner those who are willing to do his work, or how could a man, in circumstances of such deplorable necessity, continue to be guilty of a vice like this? When he reached the house, he found the landlady employed in cleaning out the room for a new lodger, as she afterwards informed our unfortunate hero, and in a state of irritation amounting to fury.

"Mr. Clive at home!" repeated the virago, "a pretty *mister* indeed—truly, a gentleman's son! If he was to offer to shew his face again within a door of mine, I would shew him the way out with a vengeance—that I would!"

"What is the matter? What has he done?" inquired Mr. Vesper in alarm.

"O, nothing at all! only bilked his lodgings, and absconded this morning."

"Are you sure—are you absolutely sure that he does not mean to return?" The landlady, who was absolutely afraid that he did mean to return scorned to tell a lie about the matter, and therefore replied only by a general philippic against dishonest lodgers and beggarly gentlemen.

Mr. Vesper stood for some time utterly confounded by a villany so mean and so atrocious. He has lived upon this poor woman's credulity, thought he, till he obtained a situation; and now, when for the first time a prospect opens of paying his debts, he sneaks out of her way! The fact of his desertion did not rest upon the landlady's suspicion alone. The open and empty trunk—the room void of every thing but dust and filth; all confirmed it, to the bare walls—no, not alto-

gether bare, for a china-ink drawing still hung neglected over the mantel-piece. It was Helen's portrait, the household god of the renegade, thus left, and here! Oh, lost! lost! lost!

Mr. Vesper paid the deficiency in the rent, cautioning the tender-hearted landlady, who actually wept with joy and surprise, to beware for the future of trusting a lodger merely because he looked like a gentleman's son. He then strode down stairs, with more bitterness of heart than he had ever felt in his life. Reprobate! he exclaimed, taking the way to his own lodgings, the twelfth hour has indeed struck, and I wash my hands of him. On Helen my hopes shall anchor, there I cannot be deceived; to her my heart returns as to a pleasant home, where all is warm, and bright, and happy. He was recalled from these party-coloured dreams by suddenly observing Wigwam standing at a little distance before him, with his back to the wall, and busily engaged in taking notes, while ever and anon he raised his eyes to the houses on the opposite side of the street.

A few persons had already stopped to gaze—for a man who stands in one of the great thoroughfares of London, and looks intently on any object, will collect a thousand spectators in five minutes—and some heads were protruded from the neighbouring windows. Altogether a disagreeable sensation was produced on Mr. Vesper's mind, and he felt, without knowing why, as if about to witness some terrible catastrophe. His first impulse, however, in the present state of his feelings, was to avoid the vagabond companion of his discarded *protege* and he crossed over to the other side of the street. The next moment he felt a thin shower of lime-dust descending on his head, and as a shriek broke from a female at one of the opposite windows, a sensation of instinctive alarm swept across his mind. A low, grating, crashing sound followed; and in the midst of cries of warning and fear from the spectators, a cloud of rubbish rushed down into the street around him. Blinded and stupified, he stood still, not knowing which way to fly, till a louder roar was heard above him, and at the instant

he felt himself caught up in the arms of a man, and saved from the destruction which must have overwhelmed him had he lingered another moment on a spot on which the ruins of a lofty building were now raining.

The deliverer and delivered, however, had hardly gained the middle of the street, when both rolled upon the ground —the leg of the former being broken by the rebound of a fragment from the wall; and Mr. Vesper, now in his turn the preserver, while endeavouring to drag the disabled body out of the reach of further danger, recognised in the pale face before him, the features of Wigwam.

"Bless my eyes, man," said the reporter—"what are you about? Don't you see that your head will be broken into by these burglar-bricks in half a second? Run for your life, and leave me alone!"

"The Lord do so to me, and more also if I leave you!" was the reply of Mr. Vesper; and with another convulsive tug, he dragged him within reach of assistance from the spectators. "Now, where would you be carried to, my good friend?" he continued, pressing the hand of the wounded man with affectionate gratitude.

"To the nearest hospital!" replied Wigwam; and he added, as if to himself, "I always expected this; I foresaw that the dissecting-table would be my fate at last; I knew I should never be buried quietly with my poor ——" and as the word was lost in a trembling of the voice, Mr. Vesper looked eagerly in his face, expecting—hoping to find in his eyes the blessed harbinger of peace, a tear. But he was mistaken—the next moment those eyes were turned with a gay recklessness upon the crowd, and, as he waved his hat over his head—

"Come, heave away, my boys!" he cried—"To old Bartholomew, at last, with Jack Wtgwam!" It was not to the hospital, however, he was carried, but to a more private, if not more comfortable asylum; where every assistance that

professional skill could give, and every comfort the magic of wealth could summon or create, were assembled at his bedside.

Mr. Vesper, after a busier day than he had spent for some time past, took his seat in the night-coach for Wales; and, with a sigh of relief, found himself emerging from the crowded streets, ceaseless din, and thick atmosphere of the metropolis. On reaching Llanwellyn, his first businesswas to walk straight to Helen's cottage; and as he approached the door, he dismissed with a still heavier sigh the crowd of thickcoming fancies which had gathered deeper on his heart than all the clouds of London. A hum broke upon his ear, which he persuaded himself, while yet at some yards distance, was nothing more than the noise incidental to the breaking up of the school; but soon a ruder call, then a merry scream, then a shout of laughter invaded his senses; and when, at length, his tardy and unwilling feet had carried him to the door, a bacchanalian song, given forth by some "blustering railer" broke upon his heart like a voice of boding and dismay.

The neat green paling on one side of the door, was broken down and trampled; on the other it was entire, except the paint, and strengthened by some thicker stakes. for the purpose of defending from annoyance a numerous litter of pigs which wallowed on the heretofore bed of flowers. The jessamined lattice-work was hanging in ruins about the door; and either window, minus one of its four panes, was garnished instead, on one side with a bundle of rags, and on the other with a wisp of straw. On the shutters some hieroglyphical emblems of good cheer, taken in conjunction with the sounds within and the signals without, gave token that the cottage, so late the abode of beauty, taste, and virtue, was now converted into what is called a hedge alehouse.

In vain Mr. Vesper rubbed his eyes and opened his ears, and examined again and again the relative bearings of the house; the metamorphosis was neither the coinage of his brain nor owing to a geographical mistake; and he at length, in a

state of mind rendered indescribable by its darkness and confusion, turned suddenly round, and run at full speed to Mrs. Clive's house, clattering along the stones of the little town with a vehemence which brought the neighbours to their doors and windows as he passed.

"My son, my son—what of my son?" cried the widow, as he entered—"Why has he not sent me his address? Is his head turned yet with the notice his talents have excited? Who is he among? Has he put on his winter flannels, as he promised me faithfully he would?" Mr. Vesper repressed the questions that had risen to his lips, and listened in respectful but sorrowful silence to the inquiries of a mother.

"Your son," said he, at last, "has obtained, I understand, a situation, and he will, doubtless, himself let you know the particulars. As for me, I discovered his address too late to be of any use."

"I knew it!" cried the proud mother, while tears of joy started into her eyes. "My heart foretold that he would not be long in London before obtaining all he wished. With a figure and talents like his, and the education and manners of a gentleman's son, it would have been strange indeed if he had failed to succeed!" An expression of benevolent and almost admiring pity rose into Mr. Vesper's face, and he could not find in his heart to destroy the poor mother's delusion.

"Let us talk now, my dear madam," said he, "if only for a moment, of our other friends—where is Helen Howard?" Mrs. Clive drew up, for an instant, with an air of prudish dignity, but soon returning to her natural manner, replied, with unaffected distress, "Indeed that unhappy girl has almost broken my heart. You could not believe it, Mr. Vesper—I am sure you *will* not believe it, and as for poor William, when he hears it, as hear it he must, it will drive him out of his mind!"

"You alarm me, madam, be brief, in the name of goodness, and let me know the worst!"

"Think the worst, and you will not think too bad. For my part, there are times when I cannot believe it yet; when I fancy, in spite of reason, that some monstrous miracle, such as we meet with in novels, will occur to make one swear that black is white and white black. So young, so innocent, so religious!" Mr. Vesper caught hold of the widow's two hands, and looked a conjuration from under his shaggy eyebrows which she could not withstand.

"Well, then, sir," said she, half frightened, "the story is this. You had no sooner turned your back upon Llanwellyn, than Mr. Fisher our county member, who happened by some whim to be in church, saw Miss Howard, some say, although others deny it, for the first time, and was vastly taken, as young men will be, you know, with her beauty. You have heard of Mr. Fisher, I dare say; a young man of good family, and large fortune; something wild, no doubt, but quite the gentleman. Well, all on a sudden Helen left off coming to see me in the evening, when she knew I most wanted her; although she would run up every now and then in the forenoon, to the detriment both of her own school and my housekeeping. In all this I suspected nothing; and, having no visitors, heard nothing—till, like a clap of thunder it came upon me, that her scholars were dropping off one by one, in consequence of reports that had arisen respecting her conduct. At length, when her school was entirely deserted, she chose to mention the subject herself, although certainly not with the air of one deprived suddenly of her bread. She told me that Mr. Fisher—I am ashamed to repeat her effrontery—that Mr. Fisher had offered her marriage! and that she—it really would be a good joke on a less melancholy occasion—that she had *refused* hsm! This was too much. If she had confessed her weakness, I do believe I should have forgiven her; but as it was, I of course quickly gave her to understand, that she was taking a liberty with me which it was not permited her to repeat. She then left me, telling me as a secret, that she was going to Lambton, where a lady, who had been an acquaintance of her mother, resided, and who was the only human

being of her own sex she could be said to know in the world, except myself. Well, sir, you will think me weak, indeed; but when she was gone, my heart reproached me, and I sent to desire her to come and speak to me again. My messenger found Mr. Fisher's cabriolet at the door, and Helen left Llanwellyn the same day without seeing me. Shall I confess my weakness farther? I even employed a person to make enquiries at Lampton, to ascertain whether that part of her story was correct, but I need not tell a man who has lived in the world that no such person had been seen or heard of there."

"And have you not yet traced her—have you heard nothing further?"

"Not a syllable."

"Then what is it that you believe? What says the town? Speak out at once, openly, honestly, boldly."

"La, sir, what can be said or believed, but what every body thinks and knows—that she went off with Mr. Fisher, and that she is now his ——," whispering.

Mr. Vesper clapped his hat on his head, shouldered his stick with a ferocious look, and rushed out of the house without uttering a word.

## CHAPTER X.

### *A Man Taken.*

Quit, quit, for shame! this will not move,
This cannot take her;
If of herself she will not love,
Nothing can make her;—
The Devil take her!

SUCKLING.

As it happens, perhaps in a majority of cases, that what every body thinks and knows has no existence except in every body's imagination, sicklied o'er with the pale cast of envy, or pusillanimous revenge, or the sheer innate malice and meanness of human nature, we shall now proceed to give our own version of Helen's history for the last few but eventful weeks.

There seems to be something, indeed so radically base in the mind of man, that one would think there was no need for a divine revelation to teach us the doctrine of original sin —although perhaps the obviousness of the truth does not suggest itself till afterwards, as was the case in that easy and natural way taught by Columbus of making an egg stand on end. To torment is the favourite occupation and delight of boyhood, whether a fly or a playmate be the object; but as the boy progresses towards the constitution of manhood he finds at every step that to tear the lower animals limb from limb—at least with his own hands—or to point the finger,

and dance and halloo at the follies or misfortunes of his neighbours, would subject *himself* to many an elongation of the nose, and many a sound and exemplary kicking. The lessons of humanity are thus inculcated through the medium of fear and self-interest, which form no inconsiderable portion of what is called the light of nature; and as the same sort of process takes place in favour of nearly all the social virtues, we need not be surprised to see in process of time the individual whose youthful recreations were those of devils, acting the part in society of a kind master, an attentive husband, and an obliging neighbour. His mind, however, is still the same, for the miracle of a second birth cannot be wrought by the world; and the old instinct of cruelty, in the accommodating spirit of Hudibras's dagger, has only changed its occupation:

> "It was a serviceable dudgeon
> Either for fighting or for drudging:
> When it had stabbed, or broke a head,
> It would scrape trenchers or chip bread;
> Toast cheese or bacon, though it were
> To bait a mouse-trap, 'twould not care."

The most trivial circumstance or coincidence in human life, and the meanest individual of the human race suggest an employment and a victim. Beauty is no availing intercession, virtue no shield, and poverty and humility no refuge.—The nod, the wink, the cough, the sigh, the upturned glance, the "if," the hint, the meaning question, the treacherous defence, the qualified assertion, the round, plump, direct, deliberate, undaunted lie, all follow in succession more or less rapid and regular, and all are the ministers of that solitary demon of cruelty without whose dominion in the human heart one half of the Law and the Prophets would be a dead letter.

It would be needless to inquire what crime our heroine had committed against the individuals whose outrageous malice at length drove her from Llanwellyn—in what way her beauty and accomplishments had excited hatred instead of admiration—and by what strange process her sweetness of temper had turned sour the "milk of human kindness" in the bosoms of her neighbours. Here, at least, the inquiry would be

worse than needless, for although no word or action of man is without a motive, even if this should lie hidden beneath the stagnating surface of habit, yet some questions, and the present among the number, would only lead into a train of metaphysical subtleties very foreign to our present purpose. It is sufficient for us to say, that no sooner was Mr. Fisher observed to pay what is called "particular attention" to Miss Howard than the whole town was in arms against her.

Not, however, that hostilities were suddenly commenced. There was first the look of discontent—then the shake of the head—then the whisper—then the sneer—then the burst of virtuous indignation; to these succeeded meetings among the malcontents, whether at the tea-table or the shop-door—arraignment—trial by witnesses in the French fashion," on their honour and conscience," but not "as they should answer to God"—condemnation—and—no, not punishment:—this they would leave in better hands. "Heaven forbid," said they, "that we should cast the first stone at her, sinless though we be ourselves; we will merely take our children from her school, and so reduce her to beggary and desperation."

As for Mr. Fisher, his part of the business was not a whit more out of rule. He was *taken* with the young woman, and resolved therefore to take her in turn if he could. "To love excellence is natural," says Johnson; "it is natural likewise for the lover to solicit reciprocal regard by an elaborate display of his own qualifications." Mr. Fisher, however, was either unacquainted with the pompous oracle or, like a true lover,—for Samuel knew about as much of love as of dancing—was withheld by the timidity of passion from making any display whatever. Certain it is that one evening when a well-dressed, and indeed *noticeable* man—for by that word we understand Mr. Wordsworth means good-looking—lifted the latch of her little parlour and walked in, Helen was as much at a loss to recognise the features of her visitor, as to understand the purport of his visit. She did not invite him

to sit down, partly because his air was evidently that of a man by whom such little civilities would be either unnoticed or disregarded; and partly because his manner betrayed that he had been drinking more freely than was likely to make him prove a choice companion for a young woman. The latter fact was made evident by his introductory address.

"I have been drinking," said he, "drinking, my angel, drinking your health so long—that, egad, I could not help coming hore to—to—to—tell you!"

"I should feel obliged," said Helen coolly, "by your teling me your name and business."

"My name! now that is hard, savage, upon my honour! Why, didn't I stare at you the whole time of service last Sunday?"

"O, I remember, you are my landlord. If you call for the rent, it is ready—although I shall request you another time to choose the forenoon for your visit."

"Now that is downright ferocious! You have no idea how you massacre me by such tomahawk expressions. Rent—and from you! No, most divine Helen; here you are the mistress, and I only the tenant at will; or if you must pay me, let it be with kisses, my charmer of Troy, for no coin will I accept at the hands of beauty, but the currency of love!"

"I understand you, sir," said Helen, "even the bad I see can be serviceable to virtue by making vice in themselves appear foolish and contemptible. Begone, sir!" and she threw the door wide open, and pointed with so commanding an air, that Fisher, to his infinite surprise, found himself in the act of obeying.

"Surely you are not in earnest," said he,—rallying, "this is the most unheard of solecism in hospitality—turning your own landlord out of doors! Come, let us talk quietly and rationally, since you dislike the poetical; you will find me a

very sensible fellow, upon my honour! What can you be alarmed at? What harm am I doing here?"

"I feel no alarm whatever," replied Helen, "I live like yourself, under the protection of the laws, and surrounded by neighbours, whom a single cry could summon to my assistance."

"A hint," cried Mr. Fisher,—"a hint, my lovely ingenious by all that's clever in woman! Now, cry if you dare!" And he seized both her hands. Helen neither screamed nor struggled; but, fixing her eyes, filled with scorn and indignation, upon his, pronounced the word "coward!" and Mr. Fisher, dropping her hands, and staggering back, half with shame, half with intoxication, left the house without uttering a word.

When he awoke the next morning, it was with a heart-ache, as well as a head-ache. Mr. Fisher was one of those men, who are literally overwhelmed with business, partly of their own, and partly of the nation's; and it sometimes happened, as it had in the present case, that he had no time to bestow on the proper management of his pleasures. How it had happened, notwithstanding, that he could have been guilty of the blindness and folly of mistaking Helen for a common character, surpassed his comprehension.

It is true, she was nothing more than a poor school mistress of a dozen poor children—a tenant of his own, renting a cottage of a few pounds a year—and, which is more, a young, friendless, orphan girl; but our legislator piqued himself on his knowledge of mankind, and womankind too; and firmly believed that he could see farther into the millstone of the human mind than any other honourable gentleman in the House. How could he have looked, he inquired, even for one moment, in her face without being struck with the impress stamped upon the features of those who are distinguished from the herd by some peculiarity of conform-

ation independent of rank and circumstances? How could he have burst with the shout of a satyr upon a solitude so pure, because so ignorant? How could he have plunged so rudely into the cold and beautiful calm of a mind which would be sure to rise, and fret, and boil at the intrusion in exact proportion to its abruptness? He pondered upon the subject of his visit till even the charms of our charming heroine became heightened in his imagination; the mortal outline of her form was lost, and she became as much a creature of fancy as any dream that ever flitted before the eye of a lover.

While exalting her person, however, into that of a goddess, he did not forget that she must possess a woman's mind; and his reasonings on her conduct were all founded on the data he had received in the course of his common experience of the sex. Pride, he concluded, after a minute examination of every possible and impossible motive of human action—pride is her ruling foible! She can despise wealth, she can subdue the love of pleasure, she can laugh at flattery —but the public homage of rank she will not fail to receive as a sweet smelling incense.

The line of action he adopted in consequence proved equally ruinous to himself and Helen. He called in the forenoon, apologised with gentlemanlike humility for the outrage he had been guilty of the evening before, and suffered her who had successively roused his passions and captivated his imagination, to win his heart.

"The truth is, Miss Howard," said he, after having already pleaded his cause with very tolerable success, "the truth is, I am very little accustomed to excess in wine, the disagreeable proof of which is, that when I am foolish enough to yield to the circumstances which beset so abominably a man whom ambition—or patriotism—call it which you will—incite to angle for popularity, I am always sure to cut a figure most particularly asinine. As an example—I saw you in the forenoon, and in church, and so far from meditating an in-

sult, it was my earnest and laborious study for the rest of that day, and the one following, to repress the thoughts which started up like spirits in the midst of meditations which *ought* to have been absorbed in matters of public importance. How far you were concerned in the excess I committed after dinner—whether your image acted the Hebe of my feast, and presented so bewitchingly the enchanted cup of intoxication, that I could not pass it by—I leave you to guess: but no sooner had the potion taken effect than you seemed to stand before me; time, place, distance—all were forgotten; how I found my way here I cannot conjecture; for I am one of those unhappy persons, who, in such circumstances, have not even the satisfaction of remembering their folly, but are haunted instead with an indistinct consciousness, a mingled feeling of fear and shame; I only know you did stand beside me, a very Circe in your charms —and that I enacted the part of a Circean victim, with the most hoggish felicity."

There was nothing in this, or his other similar speeches, very alarming to Helen. She had never "mixed with the world," it is true; but one who converses even with a single individual who has enjoyed this enviable distinction, cannot make any very remarkable mistake in estimating either a compliment or a bow. That our heroine did not know she was beautiful, it would be the most trashy of all affectations to assert; and aware of the fact, as she was, not to have been pleased with the admiration of another, would have argued either a want of tact in the praiser, or a want of human nature in the praised. To commend the beauty of a child gives delight to the mother's heart; and to commend the beauty of the mother herself, if delicately done, will give a delight altogether as natural and as pure. Trust not a woman who resents a compliment as an insult!

> "Though art's hid causes are not found—
> All is not sweet, all is not sound."

Helen, in truth, was highly pleased both with Mr. Fisher and his compliments. These, it must be understood, were in-

cidental to the speech, not the speech incidental to the compliment. He was not guilty of the absurdity of laboriously demonstrating his admiration, to one who could not possibly have any doubt about the matter. He rather allowed such allusions to escape, as a matter of course, which it would be idle to insist upon, and affected to withhold. With his own feelings he had more to do than with her charms. It was his business to prove, not that he saw her beauty, but that he felt it; and this was not to be done by enumerating and extolling her perfections, like an auctioneer, but by the side-long look, the hurried and repented word, and the interrupted breathing of an eager and terrified purchaser.

He ransacked her little library, characterised and criticised the authors, carried on the history of their subject to the present day, and by remarks—no matter whether his own or not—sometimes ingenious, and sometimes profound, created in the mind of the listener no less surprise at the versatility, than respect for the depth of his mind. He even ventured at length, to rally her a little on the prudery of her selection, and to mention one or two books in the older taste, which would give an agreeable lightness to her reading.

"I remember one of the books you allude to," said Helen, "I once borrowed it from a circulating library; but my mother told me, that to read it would be both an unprofitable, and an unlady-like occupation." Mr. Fisher smiled.

"Ladies," said he, "after all, are women; and, as partakers themselves of the follies and frailties of human nature, they should forgive the artist who paints them in an agreeable and amiable manner." It was Helen's turn to smile.

"If you imagine," said she, "that we have nothing to do but to reconcile ourselves to frailty and folly as well as we can, your observation is correct; but as it would apply with equal propriety to all the weaknesses and vices of the human race, some little irregularities, I suspect, would be the consequence of our *amiability*—some heroic murders, for instance,

some high-minded thefts, and some devout and praise worthy perjuries!"

"The irregularities already exist—" suggested Mr. Fisher "is strength or weakness, courage or fear exhibited in avoiding so sedulously to contemplate them even for an instant?"

"Neither one nor the other," replied Helen: "to shun familiarity with vice, in a well regulated mind will be as much a matter of taste as of duty. We may be soiled within as well as without; and why should not the soul, in passing through the world, shrink from pollution as well as the foot?" There was nothing very new, we believe, in this answer to a stale sophism; but there was visible in the face and manner of the speaker so much purity, mingled with so much loftiness, that the tempter stopped suddenly, seeming to exclaim, with Comus, to his attendant spirits—

> "Break off, break off, I feel the different pace
> Of some chaste footing near about this ground."

The next forenoon he called again; and with an appearance of much vexation, mingled with more dejection, delivered a message from his sister, Lady Rosemary. Her ladyship regretted, in terms of the politest bitterness, that she had only known of the existence of an individual, whose acquaintance would have been so invaluable in a neighbourhood like that of Llanwellyn, at a period when she was overwhelmed with the insipid formalities of taking leave, for a time, of the country. She hoped, however, on her return, to obtain the happiness of a friendship, which, from all she had heard, would prove the greatest, if not the only charm possessed by this cheerless and uninteresting district.

"I am sure you would have liked her," added Mr. Fisher, "she is talented, kind hearted, and high-minded, somewhat romantic in her attachments and predilections, only a very few years older than yourself—and withal, the wife of a fool." Helen pondered for some moments, and then replied, hesitatingly—

"That is a strange description: we do not marry blindfold, or by compulsion, in this country; and although we read in history of wise men acting the fool successfully, yet I think it scarcely possible that a fool could pass himself off for a man of sense upon a talented and high-minded woman."

"You think, then, that women of that description only marry men of sense? Happy ignorance! Oh, would that I, too, moved in a station where I could wonder at the sacrifices of birth and rank!"

"But we do not understand each other. In ordinary affairs, I can easily conceive that birth and rank are very annoying and unmanageable things; but you must allow me to say, that unless compelled by circumstances altogether unimaginable by us of the vulgar, class, a woman who *marries* a fool can have no pretensions to the praise of talent or high-mindedness." There was nothing, one would think, very ambiguous in this speech, or in the point selected for emphasis by the speaker; but the passions convert every thing into food, and Mr. Fisher dared to misinterpret, for a moment, her meaning.

"*Marries*," he repeated, "oh no,—you are right, that is an anomaly in the human character; and yet, should we be less guarded—less punctilious, I may say, in those dearer and closer attachments into which neither pride, nor avarice, nor ambition enters; which are felt only in the heart, and can be read only in the eyes—which have no part in this grosser earth and its unmeaning distinctions and cold formalities—"

"Of what are you talking?" asked Helen, with surprise and doubt gathering gradually into painful conviction.

"Of love, adorable Miss Howard!" exclaimed Mr. Fisher half perceiving that he had gone too far to recede, and half hurried away by his natural impetuosity—"of that divine ethereal essence which is the soul of marriage, or, rather, of which marriage is the cold and stony image, set up by the

grovelling hypocrisy of men to represent an original too lofty and too pure for their base conceptions!"

"We wander from the subject before us, sir," replied Helen, with cold disdain, "we talked of your *sister*, the daughter of your lately deceased mother. Tell her, in reply to her polite message, that I fear, from her channel of report, she must have altogether misunderstood my character, and that, at any rate, from the difference in our station and habits, there can be but little in common between us to admit of intimacy, or even permanent acquaintance."

There was no mistaking her manner while she spoke; explanation on his part would have been useless, and a show of contrition mean. Mr. Fisher left her presence, and, as he walked hastily from the door, he exclaimed to himself aloud in a voice that would have been inarticulate to another, burthened as it was with shame, astonishment, and rage, "I love her! I love her! by —— I love her!"

It was in vain to curse his folly: the deed was done. Helen had too much good sense and natural shrewdness not to have perceived his drift, especially when she compared this unlucky speech, as no doubt she would, with divers parts of the context of his conversation. To understand her purity of mind was not difficult to a man capable of reflection; and Mr. Fisher could even carry back his thoughts to a period when he, too, could have loved without sin, and admired virtue without a wish to tarnish it.

"It is in vain to think of her," he exclaimed, "she can be mine only on terms that would make me the scorn and ridicule of the world!" He did think of her, however, through many a fretful day, and many a feverish night; he made use of his opportunities as a landlord to visit again in her house; he did not explain, but avow his error; he imputed it to neglected youth, to evil association, to pride, folly, ignorance—to the world; he entreated her to forget his madness—to think of him as a friend, as a brother; to enlighten his darkness with

her knowledge, and to lead him to virtue by her example. When his soul had thus hovered, moth-like, around the light till it was absorbed in the blaze, he asked himself, with a start of alarm, what he was to do? Mr. Fisher was a man of large fortune and strong passions; he was an only son, and a spoiled child of the world—what was he to do? what did he *mean* to do? The answer was obvious under all the circumstances, but for some time no torture could have wrung it from his lips. "I will marry her!" at length broke from his heart; and as the demons of pride, avarice, and ambition fled yelling from their cherished home, he raised his head, expanded his chest, looked the heavens in the face, and felt lightened of whole centuries of years, and whole mountains of care.

Helen, in the meantime exposed to the little miseries of a shrinking income, for her pupils had by this time began to desert her, had no refuge upon earth for her harrassed thoughts. Mr. Fisher's attentions had become troublesome—nay, alarming; there was a wildness in his air, and a fixedness in his gaze which surprised and shocked her. So little was her experience in the language of passion, that the very magnitude and exaggeration of the characters rendered her unable to decipher them.

"If Mr. Fisher loves me," she said, "it is with the love of insanity; but surely this is nothing more than the exuberance and over flowing of a restless spirit, condemned for a time to the inanity of a country life. When parliament assembles, he will, no doubt, collect at once his wandering thoughts, and rush with wonted enthusiasm to the *levee* of his loftier, sterner mistress, Ambition." Having once or twice been joined by him in the street, she had determined, although with much reluctance, to interrupt a custom, she had maintained for years, of visiting Mrs. Clive regularly every evening; and owing probably to resentment for the supposed neglect, which she could not bring herself to explain, her reception from that lady, in the hurried forenoon calls she made at the expense of

her meal hours, was so cold and constrained that Helen frequently was only successful in concealing her tears till she reached the street.

As for William—but that name recalled ideas on which it was dangerous to dwell. Often, while sitting at her humble task, as some tone of voice, some favourite passage one of those somethings or nothings which are the touches to which the heart vibrates, recalled his image, a sudden flush would rise into her face, and her heart would beat with a thick and convulsive motion. Was it possible, she inquired, that she had wronged him? Had she dwelt too peevishly on the disclosure of her name? Might not his offence, if properly sifted and examined, merge into the folly of a single intoxication? Who could tell what were his motives for declining to follow up the introductions he had received, and for rejecting the employment that was offered him? Who could tell that there was not something even praiseworthy in his conduct—something, at least, that might excite as much admiration as displeasure, when viewed as the impulse of a young, lofty, and generous heart? He was always so good, so disinterested, so highminded! His faults were the faults of temperament—perhaps the peculiarities of sex. There was nothing selfish in his rashness, nothing cruel in his wrath. He was so brotherly in his kindness, so more than brotherly in his love! He was so affectionate a son—so true a friend—so amiable—so noble—so beautiful—so brave!—and poor Helen, as the spirit she had thus conjured, rose upon her lonely dream, would cover her face with her hands, and burst into a passion of tears.

"Oh, why did he not write?" she exclaimed on these occasions—"why, if innocent, did he not repel the accusation, and upbraid my decision with cruelty, or at least treat my hasty harshness with scorn? But can any defence, in such circumstances, be more eloquent and at the same time more scornful than silence? In him at least the wounds of pride do not bleed openly, nor would the pangs of disappointed love

draw a single audible sigh from his lips. He is at this moment—I know it—I feel it—struggling manfully and uprightly, and bravely through that dark, cold, selfish world into which he has plunged; and I—who should have gleamed like a lonely beacon on the shore—whose voice should have risen clear and bright above the storm—Oh, cold, dim, silent lip—eye—and cruel, cruel heart!"

Mr. Vesper too, this kind and mysterious personage, who had stolen round her heart like a parent, had his share in her meditations. He had seen William in London, but seen him only once, and for an instant. He was wise, it is true, and good, and liberal-minded, and compassionate; but was it impossible that he had been the dupe of circumstances, if not of artifice? Where was he now? In what strange manner had he vanished, after loading her, almost forcibly, with the gifts of a father and a friend, and appearing to wait only for her consent to carry into effect his arrangements for receiving her into his house and heart as an adopted child? The dangers and distresses he had foretold were now around her; and where was she to seek him in the hour of need? He seemed, in fact, more like some wandering spirit commissioned to mislead and betray than the good angel her fancy had painted him.

From these distressing and perplexing thoughts she invariably took refuge in the grave of her mother; and well could she exclaim in the language of Scripture, "I thank my God for every remembrance of thee!" Associated so intimately with all that is holiest in the human affections, and brightest in the human hopes, the recollection of her mother—her patient sufferings, her Christian heroism, her undying love—led her soul direct to the Fountain of strength and mercy, and when she rose up from her knees, it was with an assured heart, and an untroubled eye.

The decline of her school went on with unaccountable rapidity, and at length it was reduced to a single pupil. One day the mother of this solitary scholar, a neighbour to whose

family Helen had rendered some services in sickness, and at the side of a death-bed, burst into the room, and demanded her daughter in an alarmed and angry tone.

"I have used the freedom," said Helen, "to send her to the castle with a book."

"They told me so—impudent as you are!" interrupted the mother, "but I could hardly believe them. Surely the devil should be painted fair, not black! Not satisfied with disgracing yourself, you must send *my* innocent child to your paramour!" The last word of her exclamation, for which we have substituted the most delicate term of a similar import we could think of, fell like a thunderbolt upon Helen's ear. It explained in a single breath the loss of her scholars, the coldness of her only friend, and the headlong and irretrievable ruin into which she was plunged; and for some moments she sat gazing upon her sudden visitor with an expression of the most helpless dismay. When the woman, however, was about to retire in silence, half-pitying the effect which her coarseness and vehemence had produced, she started up, and seized her by the arm.

"Oh, Mrs. Merton," she cried, "you do not—you cannot believe what you have said. You know it is an invention of malice which I have not deserved—you feel that however imprudent I may have been according to the forms of society, I am as innocent of the guilt and shame you would impute to me, as your own sinless child! Tell me, is it not so? Confess that you have wronged me—that you have been overpowered by clamour—or deceived by circumstances—Speak! just one word—one little word, and I will bless you!" The woman sobbed a loud as she answered—

"You *are* innocent! My life upon it—my child's life upon it—innocent, upon my word! I knew it from the first, and I held out to this day. I told them you were an angel of heaven, but they would not hear me; and if they had not hooted me into wildness when you sent my child to the castle, I would

never have spoken to you, my kindest mistress, without a curtesy, or thought of you without a blessing and a prayer. But she shall stay—let them say what they will! My daughter shall sit at your feet, and you shall bring her up for heaven in spite of them all? Helen pondered for a moment.

"No," said she, with a long deep sigh, "your daughter shall never enter this door again! She could do me no good, and seen as I am through the distorting glass of prejudice, the connexion might do her some harm. Better, if it must be so, to drown silent and mo[illegible] than catch gasping at a straw!" The voice of the little girl at the moment was heard without, and Helen, gently pushing the agitated mother out of the door, locked herself in; and sitting down at the deserted table, covered her eyes with one hand, and with the other, like the lost ones in Vathek, [illegible]ed her burning heart.

She was slowly awakened from her trance by a rushing noise in the street, and the [illegible]cing and pawing of horses which succeeded, as [illegible] were suddenly checked before her humble porch. The next moment a loud and ostentatious knock shook the cottage to its foundations, and she ran mechanically to the door, and threw it open.

An open carriage, with four horses, and servants in splendid liveries, stood drawn up in proud array before her; and Mr. Fisher, leaping down the steps, pulled off his hat, and bent his head as if in the presence of a queen. She walked before him into the room, and when he had shut the door, turned round, and fixed upon him a look, so strange, so solemn that the lover was struck with involuntary awe, and remained gazing for some moments in her bloodless face without uttering a word.

"Surely you are unwell," said he at length, "or you are distressed by some sudden tidings of misfortune. Share with me even in your griefs, and it will be happiness to me! Or, allow me first, my matchless Helen, to plead for a title which will enable me to claim your confidence more boldly, and en-

joy it with more full and honest delight."—Helen started, and the blood rushed in a deluge to her face.

"Yes, Miss Howard," he continued, "once the slave of your beauty, I am now the convert of your virtue. I feign no 'raptures quaint and tame;' my heart is too full of the reality of passion to hold the figments of poetry. I have struggled long and fiercely with the fiends which haunt the wordly mind, and I have gained the victory. My pride I cast down at your feet; my avarice will be only too happy to become the jailor of your charms; and my aspiring ambition I bring in chains before you, that, like the damosels of old, you may impose upon it what task you please.—You see me as I am; I stand before you without disguise—or rather you see me ready and anxious to throw off, with your assistance, the still lingering folds of education and circumstance, and to appear at length the being whom even my Helen may love without remorse. Reject not the task, I beseech you; save me from myself by making me truly yours—become at once my friend, my mistress, and my wife!" At the words Helen sunk into a chair which stood beside her, her head fell back, and a few sobs of hysterical laughter escaped her lips. Mr. Fisher would have clasped her in his arms in consternation; but mastering with a strong effort the weakness of her sex or constitution, she repelled his hand, and again stood up.

"I was not prepared for this," she said; "the contingence never once occurred to my thoughts; you may guess, therefore, that your declaration has startled, nay, even stunned me. Very differently occupied was my mind before you entered—but let that pass now; I have at present merely to deliver an answer, and I trust a grateful one, to the proudest compliment a man can pay to a woman, when he offers her the custody of his fame and happiness. Our acquaintance has been too short, and your knowledge of me is too imperfect to permit me to think that there is no exaggeration in your feelings. Had we met in society, I should have been to you no more than as an individual in the mass. Your mind, naturally

active, nay, restless, must seek employment somewhere whether in love or ambition. I restore it to the nobler pursuit! Awake from your dream; arise, and go back into the world; think of this as but a short episode in your history; forget, in the hurry of action, devoted to your God and your country, a misplaced attachment; but still continue to remember its object as one, who, although declining humbly and gratefully the share you offer her in your fame, will never cease to remember you in her prayers." Mr. Fisher did not hear the concluding third of this speech: her answer was couched in her air, her manner, her tone; and so absolute a faith did he place in her sincerity, that he felt the fate of his proposal to be decided before the words of rejection had suggested themselves to her thoughts. A mist swam before his eyes, a a knell rung in his ears, and he stood for some moments after she had concluded like a man who has come forth in his sleep to fright the world with a walking image of death.

"Answer me!" he at length exclaimed, almost with a shout, as he started from his trance—"Answer me, truly—solemnly—and at once; are you betrothed to another? Does any engagement exist which dictates your refusal?"

"No."

"Then there is hope! Give me but time—give me months—years; put me to the trial; name a task and a labour; say only that I may think of you as the sinner thinks of heaven, and I shall be satisfied. Silence! Not a word. Dare not to destroy my hope! Oh, Helen! Helen!" Helen stood in grief and almost consternation at the violence of his emotion, without the power to utter a word. The carriage had returned for its master, and the horses once more struck their proud heels into the pavement opposite the house. Mr. Fisher seized her by the arm and half dragged her to the window.

"That was for you!" he exclaimed—"Do you like the horses—the liveries? Command, and they shall be changed! Cast

your eyes round those fields—those gardens—those houses—those castle-towers those distant hills—they are all yours! Do you like them? Does the sun shine bravely enough on them—Ha? But you care not for such things? you spurn alike at the gifts of man, and the mercies of God. Oh, what a paradise you might render this place! How many hungry you might feed—how many naked you might clothe—how many orphans you might bring up! But you do not care for these things. Here you will sit in your starched pride, rejecting without a motive the power to do good, and destroying without a pang the happiness of one who so truly and devotedly loves you!" Helen wept aloud.

"Then you will think of it," he eagerly exclaimed—"for a week—a night—an hour; give me but an hour—do not drive me to desperation!" Helen dried her tears.

"I dare not, and will not trifle with you," she replied; "I cannot be your wife; and the best evidence I can give you of my friendship and gratitude, is to rouse you at once from a dream which can never be realized." Mr. Fisher's face grew livid as she spoke; and an expression which seemed contending between love and hate crossed his features. No word, however, escaped his lips. He turned suddenly round, and left the apartment, and Helen followed him to the door.—He rushed into the carriage without turning his head—the footman bounded up behind—the coachman flourished his whip over the horses' ears; and the splendid equipage swept out of sight like an apparition.

No rest visited Helen's feverish pillow that night. Even the sleep which crept upon her wearied senses when the light dawned, was but a change of restlessness. The living figures which had haunted her waking thoughts became spectres in her dreams; and the real and palpable terrors of her situation which had wrestled with the drowsiness of nature, were resolved, when the latter triumphed, into a dull and heavy consciousness of misery, that lay like a weight upon her heart, and hung like a cloud upon her brain.

When she got up, her head was giddy, and her dry eyes felt as if they swam in tears. It was necessary, however, to look her fortune in the face, to consider seriously the aspect of her affairs, and determine on what was to be done. To remain at Llanwellyn was not only disagreeable, but impossible—unless she was contented to sink into pauperism; and, besides, her soul was beset with a vague idea of still heavier danger. Mr. Fisher's last look was still fixed upon her eyes, and it contained, she knew not what of dreadful meaning, which froze her very heart. Had he reviled her with open menace, and retreated from the house,

"Rage in his eye, and threats in his adieu,"

she might have pitied the weakness, and despised the meanness of his passion; but the livid colour which overspread his face, the baleful glare which shot from his eye, and the deep and terrible silence which hung upon his lips, that were of the dull white hue which sometimes paints the thunder-cloud, startled and appalled her.

Where else could she betake herself? What other spot on earth claimed peculiar regard? Should she set out like some wandering damsel of the old romance, and trust her fortunes to accident, and the direction of her route to the turning of a road, or of a straw? Alas! the woods and wilds of that heretofore world were less treacherous than the crowded haunts of this, and the giants and magicians of that brave region of prodigy were courteous knights compared to the creatures of flesh and blood whom we now encounter! There was an obscure town, called Lambton, about forty miles distant, where a lady had resided, whom she recollected her mother had been accustomed to call a friend. Mrs. Caldwell was a widow, without children, and possessed some trifling annuity sufficient to preserve an appearance of respectability; she was now, if alive, well up in years; and her mind had always been of that serious cast which is usually associated with ideas of sincerity. The town where a friend of her mother lived—or even had lived—did not seem to be altogether a strange place to Helen; and, catching ea-

gerly at the idea the instant it presented itself, she determined to remove to Lambton, introduce herself to Mrs. Caldwell, and endeavour either to obtain the situation of a governess in a family, or at least to support herself, however humbly, by undertaking the tuition of the children of the poor. The interview with Mrs. Clive, which that lady described to Mr. Vesper, took place the same day; and when Helen returned for the last time to her cheerless cottage, the indignation with which she had left the mother of William melted away in a shower of the bitterest tears she had ever shed. Her little articles of furniture she purposely despatched by a chance cart, that no trace of her route might be discovered; and turning her back for ever on the house where her mother had died, she went straight to the church yard where she was buried.

This circumstance saved her from another interview with Mr. Fisher. As she turned the corner of the wall she saw his cabriolet drive furiously down the street, and stop at the door of the deserted cottage; and entering thankfully; the "city of the silent," she determined to remain in that Mecca of her heart till nightfall, for it was now the afternoon, and then to walk to a neighbouring village, and take her seat there in the coach as it passed north ward.

The time flew quickly by in prayer and meditation, and in clearing and setting in order the little quiet home of her mother; and the shades of night falling around, began to warn her that the time of departure approached. On rising up, she saw at a little distance, in the footway, a female figure enveloped in a cloak; and, unwilling to interrupt her meditations, she lingered for some minutes longer. The female, however, did not move; and Helen, sinking down for the last time, kissed the cold stone that covered her mother, and, with a swelling heart and trembling steps, retreated from the grave. The supposed mourner, as she approached, raised the hood of her cloak, and discovered the features of Mrs. Merton, convulsed by passionate weeping.

"My dear child," she exclaimed, in a broken voice—"I mean my good, my kind young lady, I did not mean to interrupt you in your sweet and holy farewell! I have come to warn you against the base bad man you are flying from.—Conceal yourself securely—effectually, or you are lost! You do not know him; your heart could not imagine what he is. Take the path through the fields; do not trust yourself in the highway, where his spies are by this time posted; and, above all things, wrap yourself carefully in this poor cloak, which will shelter you at once from the eyes of men, and the cold breath of night. I have come, to," she continued," "I could not sleep without it—I have come to ask your pardon on my knees—" and she threw herself on her knees as she spoke, "for my conduct this morning."

"Oh, not to a creature!" cried Helen, sinking down beside her, "not to a creature, my dear Mrs. Merton! If you have offended me, I forgive you; and if I have offended you, I entreat your forgiveness. But let us consider—our knees are on the grave; the dead are lying silent around; and the Lord of life and death is above us!" Mrs. Merton pressed the monitor's hand to her heart, and they both remained in that position for some minutes, with mute but moving lips. They then rose up, and Helen accepted the cloak in silence. Her friend kissed her pale forehead, pushed her gently away, and stood with tearful eyes and uplifted hands, till the figure of the homeless orphan was lost in the gathering shades of evening.

## CHAPTER XI.

### *The Back Game.*

And though it but a day-dream be,
Yet let it like an odour rise
On all the senses here;
And fall like sleep upon the eyes,
And music on the ear.

BEN JONSON.

Have you never heard that the Nobility were at first created, not of persons sent down from Heaven, but of such as could ascertain their fathers?—SPEECH OF DECIUS MUS, IN LIVY.

WE left William on London Bridge, with a fifty pound bank-note in his hand, and without a meal, a home, or a friend; we now, on revisiting him, find him minus the bank-note, but lodged in a comfortable home, with abundance of *vivres*, and surrounded with those intimate associates, denominated friends by the world. These contradictions are not of rare occurrence; a man frequently lives more sumptuously on the reputation of having had money, than on the reality of possessing it; and we have known a ruined gentleman to be prouder in his recollected greatness, than he had been in his real prosperity; Dogberry, we will warrant you, thought more of his "losses," than of his two gowns."

With the quickness of lightning, William traced the bank-note to its true source, Mr. Vesper; and he even attempted

to persuade himself that he ought to recollect having seen him slip it between the leaves of the bible, on that fatal night, when he parted with his happiness, and with Helen. The subsequent conduct of this mysterious friend, was therefore perfectly susceptible of explanation. He must doubtless have believed, that for Helen's sake if not from a still better motive, the book was opened long ago, and the treasure found; he must have been indignant at the folly and dishonesty which dissipated the little fortune in a week; and he must have been unutterably disgusted with the meanness of spirit, which chose rather to feed upon his bounty, till it was exhausted to the dregs, than to attempt by bold adventure, or manly industry, to achieve independence. His refusal of employment from Messrs. Dot and Co. by convincing his intended patron, that his indolent and vagabond habits were irreclaimable, must have heightened to the last degree his scorn and aversion; while the fact of his having been turned out of his lodgings, never of course candidly explained, must have hurled him from the "lowest deep," in that gentleman's estimation, into a "lower still." In conclusion the circumstances of this singular intermeddling with his affairs, convinced him that—though for what purpose he could not divine—he had been put upon his trial; that during the process, he had been treated with fairness, if not favour; and that at length, he had been fully condemned with as much justice, taking every thing into consideration, as could be expected to appear in human decisions.

This was by no means a very comfortable way of explaining matters; but it was the true one. His course was now to be taken; and as he had the choice of just two ways of proceeding, there was no risk of long detention, or much perplexity. He might either go to Mr Vesper—for in his search after that gentleman, he had discovered the name of his solicitor—relate candidly the history of his adventure in London, plead guilty to a little folly, a little vanity, a little wrong headedness—but not guilty to the heavier counts in the indictment, which charged him with indolence, dissipation, and

meanness of spirit; inquire into the real purpose for which he had been brought to the bar, and the competence of the tribunal; and, finally, if a satisfactory explanation of these things was offered, demand a new trial.

Or, proud in his innocence, silent in unmerited wrong, he might throw out his arms, and grapple again with the slippery world, from the vantage ground of his bank-note; with a lusty arm and an indomitable spirit—with a heart that might pant but never fail, and a foot that might quiver but never slip, he might rise; fearless and alone, to the summit he aimed at, though all the voices that confounded the brothers in the Arabian Nights, should thunder in his ears and from that haughty eminence he might address his mysterious friend or foe—"Lo, here am I whom you once condemned as a sluggaard, debauchee, and a dastard!"

Of these two modes of action, one had prudence to recommend it, and the other spirit; and perhaps, without any additional preponderance, our adventurer would have chosen the latter. But what an advantage, in another point of consideration, did it possess over the more sure, and cautious, and cowardly alternative! William trembled with delight as he paced to and fro on London Bridge in the cold eye of the moon. The same instinct which impels a woman to admire courage and love in the bold, incites a lover's heart to high and gallant adventure; and he who finds himself guilty, in a visit to a mistress, of dismounting from his horse to open a five-barred gate, should turn back incontinent, and make for home. Let him betake himself to politics, or even to war—but love is not his field!

William drew forth the rescued portrait from its hiding place near his heart, and held it up in the chaste light, with hands blue and stiff with cold; he then pressed it with rapture to his pale lips, and to his cheeks sunken and colourless with hunger, illness, and long misery, and depositing it between the leaves of the bible, with proud eye, and head erect,

open chest, strode loftily away. Brightly, as he walked, the moon looked down upon the glittering Thames, and brightly the Thames smiled up again to his mistress moon; brightly shone the old white towers of St. Paul's, and brightly their golden cross, the centre and standard of the Christian city; brightly gleamed the walls, and glanced the windows of the silent streets; and brightly shone the face of the solitary adventurer, as ever and anon he turned up his eyes to the bright heavens, and blessed the lovely light and Him who made it.

When day at length arrived, his first care was to reclaim as many of his articles of dress as were necessary to the genteel appearance of a man worth fifty pounds; and then to provide himself with lodgings, not equal indeed to the apparent merits of their tenant,—but William by this time, knew something of the philosophy of London life. He then called on his old landlady to offer payment of the balance which he supposed to be due; but this woman, who did not eat an ounce less supper for having defrauded a starving youth of his last shilling, was shocked at the idea of a dishonesty which might bring her in troublesome contact with a man like Mr. Vesper; and she therefore repressed indignantly the suggestion which rose instinctively in her mind, and told the truth—only altering the date of the transaction a single day. While surveying with complacency, the metamorphosis in his appearance, she even began to make overtures touching his return to her maternal care; but her eye falling accidentally upon his left hand, which was neatly wrapped up in a black silk handkerchief, she stopped suddenly short—for our landlady, be it known, was not only an honest, but a modest and sensible woman, as times go.

William took leave of her in perfect good humour; and now, his arrangements for the present being completed, he set himself seriously and anxiously to prepare for the future.

Among the thousand schemes which suggested themselves he could not find one which suited at the same time his means and inclination. Either his capital was too small, or his knowledge too little; one plan was too mean, and another too ambitious, and a third too tedious. His acquaintances, whom, in the phraseology of the world, we have not scrupled to call friends, were neither numerous nor select: they all seemed, in fact, to hang with a somewhat loose hold upon the world, and a prudent man would depend as little upon their judgment and advice as a poor man would be likely to benefit by their purse or credit. Of these gentlemen Mr. Wilkins, the agent, appeared to be the most business-like person. He was somewhat ec-centric, it is true, in his motions, and somewhat mysterious in his whereabout; but, as far as William could learn, he was strictly honest in his dealings, except just when in the depths of destitution; and he certainly appeared to possess very considerable knowledge of the world, quickness of perception, and shrewdness of mind. He seemed, in short, the very man to give a good advice, and take a bad one, and to manage the affairs of any body else, and mismanage his own.

The grand difficulty, however, was to find Wilkins, who flitted about to all appearance like one of those birds that are said to live and die upon the wing. A clergyman, who once wanted him to treat for the purchase of some manuscript sermons, found him accidentally at Brixton, working very hard at the treadmill, for the purpose of showing an acquaintance how to step out with least inconvenience; and another gentleman, from the country, whose business with the agent was to arrange the exchange of a pointer, having sought all London in vain, at length stumbled upon him mending Mr. Paris's pencil in the cage at the top of St. Paul's. Wigwam, however, who both feared and disliked him, was accustomed to say that nothing in the world was easier than to produce him at a moment's notice; and one evening, at the Three Puncheons, to make good his assertion to the company, he burnt some snuff in the candle, and

pronounced his name three times—when, sure enough, Wilkins bounced into the room.

Our adventurer contented himself with calling at two or three places where he knew the agent was sometimes to be seen; and the same evening, while musing with a smile as he returned home, on Wigwam's conjuration, and his face of alarm when he saw its successful result, he beheld, on entering his apartment, which he had neglected to lock, a figure standing before the fire, and gazing upon Helen's portrait, restored to its frame and its post above the mantel-piece —the identical figure of the man he sought.

Wilkins was now genteely, nay, even elegantly dressed, and became the change as well as Cinderella's fairy footmen did their novel position behind the coach. There was something, however, in his care-wrinkled forehead and shrewd, sharp eye, very different from the common characteristics which bespeak the wearers to be gentlemen merely by disavowing a relationship with any thing else; and William, so far from being unable to discern from his face and air what he was, which indicates an ambiguity supposed to be decisive of the question of gentility, would have been absolutely at a loss, if the inquiry had been made, to say what he was not.

"Your pardon, Mr. Clive," said Wilkins, "I came here because I knew you wanted me; and finding the door of your chamber open, I of course concluded that the owner, a man who has gone through the horrors of initiation in London life, could not be many yards off. I have been detained, however, for fourteen minutes, and—" looking at a very handsome watch, "eleven seconds—growing from the hearthrug—not the rug, you have none, (I know where they are to be had cheap,) but the hearth-stone, like a patent fender, (a friend of mine, by the way, has one to sell, a dead bargain, with or without the fire-irons,) and gazing at this portrait—the frame of which should not have cost you more than eleven shillings, although, I dare say, you paid a guinea.

"You have a pretty talent, a very pretty talent, Mr. Clive for such things. I know a carver and gilder, who thinks of going into the picture line, and I should be happy to recommend you."

"My dear sir, it was just something of that kind—I mean, I should not be indisposed to treat—really I am much obliged to you!"

"Yes, yes, you may rely upon me. A friend of mine, who does not draw much better than you, makes—let me see—on the average—" "How much?"

"Just thirteen and ninepence per week, all but a fraction. But this portrait: it does not look like a fancy-piece—the nose is a little awry, and there is a slight twist in the neck, as if the patient laboured under a distortion of the spine, for which I would recommend her mamma to use the straps lately invented by a gentleman of my acquaintance. *Not* a fancy piece, eh?"

"No," said William, somewhat sulkily.

"Well, perhaps it is a secret," continued Wilkins; "I am sure I ought to know it, nevertheless—that face is as familiar to me as my own. Where I could have seen it, however—really I never caught my memory tripping before. And now, sir, what can I do for you? I see you have no watch."

"To be frank with you, Mr. Wilkins," said William, who was by this time almost cured of his false shame, "although I certainly have money enough to release—I mean to procure a watch—I wish in the first place to earn one; and my purpose in desiring to see you was to ask your advice, as a man of experience, with regard to the quickest and surest mode of doing so. I have a small sum, a very small sum—say about forty pounds, of ready cash, beside me; and it has occurred to me, that even this might be turned to some account, if I knew how to set about it."

"To be sure it might," replied the agent, "to be sure it might! I know a lady who would board you a whole year for that sum, if introduced by me, toast and water at dinner included."

"But the question is, not how long I could exist on the money, but how to make the pounds breed—you understand me?"

"Certainly. There is a friend of mine in St. Mary Axe, who thinks of retiring from the grocery line. He would ask you fifty pounds for the good will, if you went yourself, but I could get it for forty; and he will be glad of a bill for the stock and fixtures."

"That would not be an impossible plan," remarked William, smiling, "if I had only a wife to sit behind the counter."

"O," said the agent, "I know several young ladies who want husbands very badly. I will engage to suit you in eight and forty hours, Doctors' Commons business included."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed William; "but I see you do not understand me; and in good faith I begin to think I do not quite understand myself."

"I understand you very well," replied Wilkins; "you will not stand behind a counter? No.—You will not trudge about town to beg commissions, hat in hand? No.—You will not travel with books published in numbers, and prints for the boarding schools? No.—You will not hawk bandboxes—or attend funerals, or auctions—or sell smuggled brandy, manufactured at Smithfield? No.—You have no turn for the stage; and no knowledge of drugs or surgery?—No, no, no.—Very well: there is many a small merchant in the city, who would be happy to allow his wife, or mistress, to pocket your forty pounds as a premium for introducing you to his countinghouse, provided you were qualified to manage the

business. You can write? You are master of the various forms of accounts, as they are kept in London? No! You have been accustomed to keep books? I'll warrant me, no—"

"Yes—at school."

"Oh, murder! Then you are a lost man; for you would not only have to learn, but to unlearn. But you would tell them in your application, no doubt, that you understood Latin, and Greek, and French, and Italian and you would expect the merchant to be marvellously well pleased at the idea of engaging a servant, unfit at once by his knowledge and ignorance, for the duties of the desk; come, come, confess the truth; you want your forty pounds to hatch themselves.'

"No, only to act as a nest-egg."

"But it is not the egg that multiplies, my dear sir! To be plain with you, if you were the son of a labourer, or of some small tradesman, or lean unwashed artificer, I would undertake to make you Lord Mayor of London in twenty years; or if you had been brought up to the bar, the pulpit, or the pestle, I would insure you a good soft seat on the woolsack, the archbishopric of Canterbury or the honour of feeling the pulse of majesty. As it is, the only really useful qualification you possess is the art of penmanship—for, alas! you are a gentleman's son—and your destiny, therefore, is neither in your keeping or mine: you are as a straw in the water or on the wind, and must sink or swim as wills the gale or the tide." William's countenance fell as the agent spoke; and, when he had concluded, he rose hastily up, and took two or three short-paced uneasy turns through the room.

"Mr. Wilkins," said he at length, stopping suddenly before him, "I am at least different from a straw in the power I possess of throwing myself into what current or upon what wind I please. At present I am lying rotting on the bank, listening with a wistful ear to the leaping of the waters and

the rush of the gale. I want action, were it even strife, and motion, if it be but downwards. I shall either mount or plunge, and that instantly; counsel me, therefore, as to my first essay, if I fail, you will only have lost so much breath—if I succeed, I pledge myself that your commission will be handsome." At the word commission the agent's hand sought instinctively his pocket-book; but the next moment, raising the fore-finger to his deeply marked forehead, and pondering for some time—

"Well," said he, "at this time to-morrow evening you may expect to see me again. There is a gentleman of my acquaintance in want of a——, but I will not anticipate. Now, I would give something to know who that girl is with the twisted nose and the deformed neck. Good bye, good bye!" and he retired with his head turned over his shoulder, and his eyes fixed upon Helen's portrait. Our adventurer had sunk into a reverie, when the door again opened, and the agent pushing in his head, inquired—

"Is her name Vesper? I mean Ormond?" "Neither one nor other," replied William, in a tone of displeasure; and Wilkins disappeared.

Still more uneasy and irregular were William's paces through the room, when finally left alone. Forty pounds, it seemed, were not a very large fortune; London was not the universal field it had the credit of being; and a man who would live in a nation of shopkeepers must absolutely know how to buy and sell. The art of penmanship was a very good thing, but it was somewhat common; and as for Greek, Latin, French, and Italian, these, no doubt, were of considerable utility to that enviable class of mortals called school assistants. William, however, was prevented from aspiring to a profession he was so well qualified for, by a doubt of its being as short a cut to fame and fortune as he could wish. He had seen in the newspapers an advertisement for a "complete classical scholar," who was offered "full board and lodging," although without salary, and required only to find his own

washing. Burnet, he feared, was right; labourers and mechanics were better off than those who were only gentlemen's sons.

It was yet early in the evening, and he determined to call upon his cold-mannered but kind-hearted friend, and inquire how he was getting on; but first he unlocked his golden hoard, and transferred a few pieces to his pocket. Poor fellow! thought he, it will not injure *much* my chance of making a fortune; and I owe him the offer of a loan in return for his—and William hastily put out the candle, as the idea occurred to him of a coin which we had not the indelicacy to name: it is so uncomfortable to blush in the light.

For some days past he had been on the look out for the reporter, with a similar intention, but this person had disappeared. The newspaper offices could give no news of him; the Three Puncheons had been untasted by him for a week; and even a fine dashing fire, which took place in the next street, and which William attended on purpose, shone not on Wigwam. Our hero felt uneasy, and even somewhat melancholy at the loss, although he did not attempt to persuade himself that it would have any very disastrous effect upon his destiny. Every body, in fact, seemed to partake, in a greater or less degree, of the feeling, and to think that they could have better spared a better man.

William started from a gloomy reverie as he found himself at Burnet's door; and when a strange voice answered to his knock, his heart quaked with indefinite dread. Another family was in the law-writer's place, which knew him no more. The former tenants had removed, the successors were ignorant where; they were not even sure that they had left the house; he would learn next door, or lower down. He knocked at the next door, where he found the medical student still at his books and coffee. Burnet?—the student thought he remembered the name; he believed there was a person so called in the house; he had an idea it was lower down. Lower down

the two Quakers were still reading the newspapers, and sharing amicably the contents of a pewter pot. "I know not, friend," said the speaking partner, "lower down, perhaps, lower down." At the first floor a genteelly dressed little girl, with a white frock and trowsers, opened the door. He has left the house, thought William; it is needless to inquire. Poor fellow what has become of him? And he was moving away with a slight apology, when he heard his name announced by the portress.

The door of the room was then thrown wide open, and William almost fancied the picture which presented itself to be a delusion of his senses. A cheerful fire blazed in the grate, and a candle, though single, yet of perfect respectability, burned on the table. A book and some sheets of music at one end, balanced a handsome work-box at the other; and all received a certain richness from the deep green cover, which was not a piece of casual baize assuming with tawdry effrontery the airs of its betters, but a legitimate table-cover, with yellow border, and a great yellow something in the middle; the carpet was a plain sober field of brown cloth, conveying at the same time an idea of snugness, and suggesting a hint of something richer underneath; the chairs, although of the common imitation rose-wood with cane bottoms, looked comfortable and substantial in stuffed covers with chintz drapery; the two tables were of solid mahogany, made for use as well as sale; the window-curtains, hung on a plain gilded roller, and matching the chair-covers, descended majestically from the roof, and overflowed the floor with a look of ease and abundance; while that most indispensable of all articles of London household paraphernalia, a chimney glass, by its ample dimensions, the heavy gilding of its frame, and the rich glitter of its surface, seemed calculated to impress the visitor with feelings of unqualified respect.

Mrs. Burnet, with the youngest child in her arms, was in the act of rising hastily to welcome the visitor with good old-fashioned warmth. A glow of pleasure, heightened but not

rendered unamiable by the thin transparent surface of vanity through which it shone, threw a lustre over her pretty features, which made her seem almost beautiful; while with her bare head, and almost bare neck, and white muslin gown, she looked liker a girl in the joyous spring time of youth—the rising star of a family's hope—than a wife and a mother. Burnet himself, brandishing a flute in one hand and a child's doll in the other, was striding with slippered foot to the door. A genteel undress, at nine o'clock in the evening, proved that he was not fool enough to sacrifice a jot of comfort to become the ape of fashion; and he looked, indeed, in every respect like a man who was not afraid to romp with his children, and kiss his wife, and call his morning gown a *house-coat*. The a pathetic gravity which, but the other week, had given him so old and withered an appearance, was metamorphosed into a strong broad shade of manly sense; and his years, which so lately might have been reckoned at two score, had dwindled into the short span of twenty-eight.—The Child who had let William in, stood staring at him, with an acquaintance-claiming look, all the father in her open brow, and all the mother in her bright blue eyes; while a young girl, apparently in the capacity of a domestic, was on her knees on the carpet endeavouring to insinuate into his night-gown the head of a little naked boy, who disputed with sound lungs and lusty arm her authority. William's rapid glance had hardly completed its circle, when his surprise disappeared in an expression of benevolent delight; and the two friends, gazing on each other, and each calling to mind, no doubt, as he gazed, the circumstances of their last meeting, shook hands two or three times before their feelings subsided to the speaking point.

"Oh, how glad we are to see you!" exclaimed Mrs. Burnet, unlocking her husband's hand, and presenting her own, "we were sure that something terrible had happened—that you had been taken unwell, or——"

"Or laid up with a fit of the gout, or the spleen," inter-

rupted Burnet, "or had grown rich and forgotten your old friends—nonsense. I have attended every Coroner's inquest I could hear of for his week past, and meant to-morrow to make the tour of the workhouses in search of you—beginning at St. Olave's." William had by no means reached the philosophy of his friend, and he winced at the ideas his speech suggested. He was beginning therefore to reply to the politer surmises of the lady, but Burnet interrupted him.

"I know all about it," said he, "you owe your salvation to a bushy-eyebrowed man in a brown coat and brown cane—Vesper I think he called himself—and I can tell you it was the greatest chance in the world that I did not withhold your address from him, and thus allow you to sink, out of mere goodnature.—I called at your lodgings the day after I concluded he had been with you, but that amiable landlady of your's told me you had not seen him. I questioned and cross questioned, however—I have a natural turn for the law—till I wrung out of her that he had paid the rent, and that afterwards she had cheated you out of a shilling—perhaps the last you had in the world—for handing to you out of the parlour-window that poor daub you used to scare the flies with above the mantel-piece. On examining minutely the premises, I then discovered, you may guess with what horror, marks of blood upon the window-seat; and I was not long in terrifying the Jezebel into confessing that the casement had come down upon your hand *accidentally*. There is your shilling," continued Burnet, "but I have now the business of her landlord in my hands; and if the rent is not forthcoming at a day's warning, if it should be twenty years hence, the Lord have mercy on the——!" William smiled at his friend's heat, and, to turn the conversation as well as gratify his curiosity, put some questions to Burnet about the manner in which *his* salvation had been effected. Burnet's anger melted into a look of complacency as he replied:

"Really, I do not know that there is any thing which

ought to appear very strange or startling in the change with me. I was brought up to the law, you are aware, and must have obtained some slight smattering of knowledge as I went along. This I have improved by reading, when I had no thing more important to do; and, in short, these things cannot be hidden for ever; attorneys are sharp fellows—very sharp fellows—and I was offered by a gentleman in Lincoln's Inn Fields, plump, two hundred a year."

"That is a large salary," remarked William, "for an inexperienced clerk. But the gentleman of course was a friend?"

"Why no—" said Burnet with some hesitation, "I cannot say I knew him at all."

"But no doubt you took some mode of making your knowledge and talents known to the profession?"

"Really, I cannot call to mind that I did."

"I am curious to know the name of this sagacious fellow, who looks for a managing clerk in a third floor back room, and discovers him intuitively in a copier of papers."

"Wedge," said Burnet gravely—"one of the first men in Lincoln's Inn Fields."

"Mr. Vesper's solicitor, as I live!" ex-claimed William.

The two friends looked for a minute in one another's faces; the expression of Burnet's partaking in some degree of what is called the foolish. At length slapping William smartly on the shoulder—

"Upon my life," said he, "you have more *nous* than I gave you credit for! Why, what an ass have I been—what a double distilled neddy, to think that old Wedge would have given *me* two hundred a year—paid me a year's salary in advance—cleared the indenture fees—and hinted at the pos-

sibility of a partnership when my time expired! The best of it is that the brown-coated gentleman actually offered me his assistance, and that I must have subsequently seen his name in my employer's books. Who is he, my dear fellow—your maternal or paternal uncle?"

"Neither one, nor other."

"A friend then, of course; have you known him long?"

"I have no distinct recollection of having seen him more than once; and I never exchanged with him more than half a dozen words in my life."

"Who is he, then—what is he?"

"I know nothing at all about the matter."

No reasoning or comparison of notes could throw the slightest glimmering of light upon the subject, and they at length gave up the speculation in despair, after having come to the conclusion that Mr. Vesper was a very rich, a very benevolent, and a very odd man.

"Can you tell me anything about Wigwam?" asked William, taking up his hat.

"Oh, the vagabond—he is dead," said Burnet, "a house in Southampton Street that every body expected would have been down weeks ago, waited on purpose till he passed, and fell upon him. Some say he died on his way to the hospital, and others that the melancholy event occurred after a debauch he committed there on a bottle of tincture of rhubarb, which he mistook for brandy. After all, poor fellow, I would cheerfully pay his tavern scores for the next twelve months to have him alive and merry with us now. But you will affront Isabella—I mean Mrs. Burnet—if you do not afford her an opportunity of shewing that she is not now obliged to send her visitors to the public-house. There is a liquor-stand especially, a very handsome affair upon my word,

with decanters that look as if they were made of diamonds—you may see that she is anxious you should admire it, for she has just now accidentally moved it, to the partial exposure of its glories, while looking for nothing, in that cupboard. What, shall we indulge her? Come, out with it, my lass; stir up the fire—there—cheerily; light another candle, and set it up before the chimney-glass, where it will shine as well as two. Now, draw in your chair, my friend, closer to the fire and my wife; and listen, while Betty boils the kettle, to old Willie Dunbar, the prince of the early Scottish poets, whom I have just been reading:

> "Be merry, man! and take not far in mind,
> The wavering of this wretched world of sorrow!
> To God be humble, to thy friend be kind,
> And with thy neighbour gladly lend and borrow:
> His chance to night, it may be thine to morrow.
> Be blithe in heart for any aventure;
> For oft with wisdom 't has been said a forrow,
> Without gladnesse avails no tresure!"

The sight of Burnet's happiness had a beneficial effect on our hero's nerves. That night he slept and dreamed well; and the next morning he arose to weave at will the sleepless dreams of buoyant, restless, and high-spirited youth. The boding voice of Wilkins died away in his ear, and the suggestions of hope and vanity rose in their stead. The agent, indeed, did not appear to be half so clever a fellow as he had thought him; his experience seemed to have lain exclusively in the mean walks of traffic; and his views of profit were chained to the snail-creeping pace of a fair *per centum* upon capital employed. His process was entirely mechanical, and appeared to be more suited to the abilities of a steam-engine than to those of a gentleman's son. He never dreamed of making allowance either for the inequalities of talent and intellect, or the thousand *circumstances* which fill the sails of adventure. William in fact almost regretted that he had promised to meet him in the evening, from the fear that some proposal of preposterous vulgarity awaited him.

In the meantime his position with regard to Mr. Vesper

was not in the slightest degree altered. The bank-note was changed, and partly spent—the Rubicon was passed; and the advice still to seek an interview with the donor which he had received from Burnet, was both mean-spirited and injudicious. It was now, also, from the lapse of time, absolutely necessary to allay his mother's fears by throwing off the mystery he had hitherto preserved on the subject of his real situation; and in addition to the other urgent reasons he had for desiring immediate employment, the recollection of his late walk on London Bridge swept across him sometimes like the icy breath of despair. Upon the whole, therefore, he waited with a mixture of reluctance and expectation for the visit of Wilkins. The agent made his appearance at the appointed time to a minute.

"Will you do me the favour," said he, as he entered the room, "to inform me, whether the original of that portrait resides, or ever did reside at Wells?"

"I never knew her to reside any where but at Llanwellyn," replied William:—"but you, Mr. Wilkins, who are a man of business, will excuse my reminding you that we have met on business."

"Your business is done," said the agent, "you are engaged in the capacity of private secretary to a member of parliament."

"Upon my word, I am very much obliged to you," replied William; "but I cannot say that I fancy very much being engaged in any situation whatever without having been previously consulted. What is the gentleman's name?"

"Clarence Fisher Esq." A momentary shade of suspicion had crossed William's mind, as the agent mentioned a description of employment so absolutely antipodial to the business of barter and sale, as any thing connected with the House of Commons; but the name, which he recognised as that of a gentleman of high influence and fortune in his own county,

at once restored his confidence; and the note which Wilkins presented immediately after, sent a tingle of delight through his frame.

"To William Clive, Esq.

"Sir,

"Your name having been mentioned to me by a mutual friend as that of a gentleman of high literary attainments, and a periodical writer of eminence, I am desirous of profiting by your abilities in the manner which will be explained by the bearer. If you will favour me with your company at breakfast to-morrow morning, we can enter into the necessary arrangements. I am, sir,

"Your most obedient servant,

"CLARENCE FISHER."

William was unable to speak for some moments, so thick was the crowd of ideas which demanded words; and he had recourse, therefore, to his old expedient of striding through the room.

"You are debating," said Wilkins, with a kind of sneer, "whether it would not be proper to stultify me in the eyes of Mr. Fisher, by refusing to ratify the agreement I have made in your behalf. It is good, however, to be cautious; who knows whether there is not a vacancy in the list of ambassadors? A periodical writer of eminence, and a gentleman of high literary attainments, should not throw himself away! Come, come," continued he, his voice softening, and a smile almost of benevolence playing on his features, "you know you are glad of the offer. I can almost see the beating of that young heart through your dress; and I can quite see the soaring of your young imagination in those sparkling eyes. Beat high, noble heart! Soar loftily, unsullied thoughts! The time will come soon enough when you shall have forgotten to tremble to the touch of joy, or mount on the wings of hope!"

"Mr. Wilkins," said William, taking hold of his hand, "you have read my mind. I *am* overjoyed at a circumstance which opens a prospect to me I have not lately contemplated, except in dreams. Your own evidence, as well as every thing else around me, had begun to force home upon my mind the conviction that I was unfit, from my education, and the circumstances almost of isolation in which I was placed, to enter into successful rivalry with the crowd that strives and jostles in this human wilderness. There now opens to me a more lofty and more lonely path to the temple of fortune—a path which will bring me into contact with the mighty spirits of the time—with the wise, the noble, and the great; and where the heart of the climber is strengthened, and his foot steadied by the excitement of worthy emulation, and the hope of honourable reward." The benevolence of the agent's smile degenerated into ridicule as William went on; and when he had concluded, he answered drily—

"Ay, ay, you will meet with members of parliament enough, I'll warrant you—with many a justice of the peace, and custos rotulorum—and many a limber-shanked young hero from Oxford and Cambridge, who has been forced away from his Christmas pudding, by paternal or patronial authority, to worry a fox, or a goose, ay, or a rat in St. Stephen's, and yelp "yes," or "no," and bark "ya—ya—ya!" at the signal of the whipper-in of his pack. and then, the emulation—true; the hack of a party, or of a public man, must not be nice; he will not stick at trifles in the race—roads dirty or clean, low ruts or no ruts—all's one to him; a strong stomach, and a willing tit of a conscience, are the main things. And as for the reward—why, a hundred a year in the Excise, or the guards hip of a long stage, or even a curate's gown, is no bad exchange for a little dirty ink." William's heart beat loudly enough to drown the voice of the agent, even if his ears had not been engaged in watching the flight of his imagination, which sung as it soared. A few of the concluding words, however, caught here and there, induced him to turn a look of pity and contempt upon the speaker. A shopkeeper,

thought he, a mere ragman! as Wilkins abruptly took his leave—

"And left him alone with his glory."

The next morning, the agent called betimes, and found William at the toilet, at which he assisted with the most valet-like assiduity.

"I am sorry you have shaved," said he, "I could have done it much better than that. By the bye, the best way to get your razors, is to purchase a dozen from a jew boy in the street. You will get the lot for ten shillings, and be absolutely sure of finding three or four of them good, the rest you may sell to your old clothes-man for fourpence a piece. What, a white cravat to breakfast! By no means—they would take you for a shopman, calling with your master's bill. This black silk handkerchief, that brown frock, and—where are your boots? If you have none, I will cut you straps in a twinkling, from the back of your trowsers, and if you draw them tight, your shoes will pass well enough for Wellington's. The white cravat will do better, pinned as an under waistcoat—there, it looks pretty and genteel. No watch yet? That will never do; put money in thy pouch, and we'll buy one as we go along—or at least a few seals and a ribbon. Be sure, however, to take a needle and thread with you, to stitch them to your waistband; I have known of accidents in my time; and we must remember to get the ribbon long enough, that you may not be obliged to pull out your no-watch to seal a letter."

"I trust," said William, with some embarrassment, "that we may do without a watch this morning. The fact is I have one—but I have—a—lent it for a few days."

"Oh, up the spout? Well, so much the better; we'll call and get it. This beaver wont do; give me some of your hair oil, and I'll make you a new hat. Why, Gad-a-mercy! what do you mean to do with that great stick? We shall meet with no mad dogs in this cold weather, I assure you! There, now

—but don't cock your hat like an Irish hay maker, it looks blackguard, I assure you. That will do; upon my word you don't look like a shoplifter! Now lock your trunk—not so; to lock the door alone is of no use; I never knew a single gentleman's landlady who had not a duplicate key to every door in her house. Proved the fact in one case myself, by piling up all the glass and china in the cupboard in such a way that if the door was opened incautiously—my eye, what a crash! Heard it when I was half way down the street. Now, come along, my dear sir; but step circumspectly, or your straps will go." Wilkins run on in the same way during the whole of the walk, exhibiting much of the shrewdness as well as littleness of a man who lives by artifice, or, in the common phrase, by his wits.

When they reached Mr. Fisher's house, he nodded familiarly to the servant who opened the door, and whispered—"How did you like the stockings, John?" and when admitted to the presence of the member of parliament, his first words were—

"I have brought you the snuff-box, sir—two pounds twelve and six—and here is Mr. Clive—Mr. Clive, Mr. Fisher."—Mr. Fisher was a very gentlemanlike sort of youngish man, and did not by any means resemble a senator. He received William with the most polite affability, and rushed at once into a stream of remarks on literature and politics, which seemed to be the sequel of a train of thought which he had been pursuing alone. His conversation, somewhat desultory and pyebald, presented certain of the advantages of a dictionary, where you meet with meanings and definitions without being troubled with the process by which these are arrived at or manufactured. Some of his propositions, indeed, might have been susceptible of dispute; but many were self-evident, and many ingenious, and those which were neither one nor other were at least new.

William, who of late had been a "constant reader" of the reviews and magazines, detected occasionally a striking resemblance between the thoughts and facts of his intended pa-

tron, and those which were the most fashionable in these floating surfaces of literature; and indeed the numerous pamphlets scattered about the room, in covers brown, blue, and green, gave additional token that Mr. Fisher's studies lay a good deal in a class of reading, perhaps the best calculated that could be imagined to give an appearance and a polish of knowledge, to him who has no time, or no inclination to grapple with the reality.

In politics, William had the pleasure to find that he could side with his patron without hurt to his conscience. Mr. Fisher was a patriot; but whether the patriotism of that day was ministerial or popular, whether it opposed or advocated Catholic emancipation, and which side it took on the questions of corn, taxes, and poaching, we do not know. It is pleasant, at any any rate, to think with a member of parliament, especially when one is eating his rolls, and drinking his chocolate; and William rose from breakfast with a very profound respect for the talents and probity of Mr. Fisher. This sentiment was greatly increased at the opening of the main business of the meeting.

"Here," said Mr. Fisher, unlocking a portfolio of papers, "here is a sketch by which you will be enabled to perceive more completely the character of my political sentiments. It is a mere sketch, remember, or rather a series of memoranda for a pamphlet, which I intended to have written during the last recess. Business, however, pursues a public man even to the country; and so much engrossed have my thoughts lately been, that I have found it quite impossible to fill out my idea into a shape fit for publication. Now, with talents like yours, and study so intense, united to that sleepless assiduity which characterises the gentlemen of the press, it has occurred to me, that, perhaps with little expense of time or labour, you might be able, under direction of these memoranda, to supply the details. I may add, that although in the main point my sentiments shall ever remain unchanged, yet, I am not so vain as to reject counsel from your supe-

rior experience, or to refuse you permission to alter or modify the secondary views and general arrangement of the subject. You need not be at the trouble of reading the papers here; but when you have thrown your own ideas upon paper under direction, as I have said, of my memoranda, and taken into consideration the form in which the work should be presented to the world, we shall have another consultation.

"And now, my dear sir, you need be under no apprehension that you will be for ever employed in the capacity of a mere amanuensis. Although I shall not, at present, be guilty of the vanity of entertaining publicly a secretary, more especially in the person of a gentleman so high in the walks of literature as yourself; yet, in private, you must permit me to treat you not merely as a secretary, but as a friend. There are many little things, you must be aware, which would be but the amusement of an idle hour to one like you, and which to me are vexatious and overwhelming, on the same principle that it is the additional straw, after his full load has been imposed, which breaks the back of a certain respectable animal. For instance, I am to preside to-day at a public dinner, and speak on a subject flat, stale, and unprofitable to me, but into which, perhaps, *you* could contrive to throw something brilliant and striking. There is a newspaper, in which you will find an account of the same annual ceremony for last year, Lord Twaddle in the chair. Every thing will go on in precisely the same form to-day; and, in fact, without the assistance of a secretary, I believe I should be obliged to have recourse to the expedient of an honourable friend, who files his speeches regularly, and makes them all serve, year after year, from one dissolution of parliament to another. Do, my dear sir, sit down, and set your wits to work—let me out-twaddle Twaddle, for once! Come, Wilkins," continued Mr. Fisher, "'to return to the twenty pounds'—all this is Sanscrit to you; we shall now go into another room and get over some business more congenial to your tastes and habits, and leave Mr. Clive to his amusement."

When the agent followed the honourable member to an inner chamber, he threw himself with a jerk upon a table, and sat eyeing his patron in silence with a sullen and dogged look, while, the latter bolted the door.

"Read that!" said Mr. Fisher, throwing a letter to him, with the careless and yet churlish air with which a beggar tosses a superfluous crust to a dog.

"You see," said the patron, when Wilkins had finished reading—"you see, the hag Caldwell can be of use yet. All has happened for the best. If I had caught the fair fugitive some noise and nonsense might have taken place; but as it was, her fit of illness, by confining her to an obscure cottage, concealed her as effectually from my search as if the gods had changed her into a tree. Then when she gets up from her bed, what does she do? Why, she walks direct, as if under the special guidance of *Fatum* itself, to Lambton, and inserts herself between the jaws of the beldame Caldwell, a pensioner at will on *my* bounty!"

"I need hardly ask," said Wilkins with a sneer, "what your worship means to do with the girl?"

"I mean," replied Mr. Fisher, "to make her either my mistress or my wife—but she shall have her choice." Wilkins emitted a scornful and incredulous chuckle.

"Why, you outcast cur!" cried the patron, striding up to him in a fury—"you pendulum between life and death! the creature of my sufferance—the wretch over whose neck the sword of public justice hangs suspended by my policy, and withheld from falling by my mercy—do you suppose that I would deign to dissemble with *you?*"

"Call me felon," said Wilkins, "and you have said all. In a moment of drunken desperation I robbed your father long—long ago. The witnesses were few—only you, and the devil, and one or two more. Well, I was not afraid of death, for I could die then—although I cannot now; and yet

I sold myself—for a few years of breath, of toil, of anxiety, of cold, and hunger, and nakedness, with fits of repletion between—for this I sold myself; the worst bargain I ever made in my life! You see I have not forgotten, I do not affect independence, not I; but I have one comfort still—you cannot hinder me from sneering and chuckling, if you were to give your blood for it." Mr. Fisher's fits of rage, to do them justice, were seldom of long continuance, at least in their external phenomena, and he replied in a conciliatory, if not friendly tone.

"You must acknowledge, Wilkins, you sometimes provoke me to forget myself by your cursed impertinence. As to your having sold yourself, that I know nothing about; I only know that, in return for the little services you have occasionally been kind enough to render me, I have offered you again and again a handsome situation in a Government office. If you prefer the vagabond and uncertain life you now lead to one of comfort and respectability, it surely is not my fault."

"It is touching that situation," said Wilkins. "that I have come here to-day; and, with your good pleasure, we shall discuss the subject before entering upon any other. That you *have* made me the offer you mention I allow; and if it was kindly meant—why, it was kindly done, that is all. Its conditions, however, were rest and permanence of abode. How could I rest—with hell in my bosom, and horror at my heels? I am a good-natured man, Mr. Fisher, a humane, charitable, kind-hearted man; I have nothing of the fiend about me, not an inch—and yet I could not rest. Well! I have hitherto rejected your offers, and continued wilfully the vagabond which crime and folly have made me; but my mind is changed—I now claim your promise—I demand the debt, if debt it be, to the uttermost farthing; and then, perhaps, we may begin a new score."

"The debt shall be paid," said Mr. Fisher; and that instantly."

"But not to me. No, no—I am not such a fool. Circumstances have not changed with me since yesterday. I am the same man, haunted by the same thoughts, and surrounded by the same destinies. I cannot rest, not I, with a halter swinging over my head, swaying to and fro in the gale of events, and hitting me every now and then a knock on the pate enough to awaken the dead. In a word bestow the situation upon that lad who is writing in your breakfast parlour, and I will acquit you of the debt, and give you a receipt in full of all demands." Mr. Fisher pondered for a minute.

"You have sometimes, Wilkins," said he, "given me credit for a certain sagacity in ferreting out the motives of others from their lurking holes; but, upon my life, you fairly puzzle me now. Frankly, what interest have you in the destinies of this young adventurer?"

"I will tell you," said Wilkins. "He is, if I am not grossly mistaken, the natural son of William Vesper, the brother of the unhappy man whom I was at least the proximate cause of leading to destruction. The extraordinary interest taken in his fate by Mr. Vesper, and the love which I happen to know subsisted between the latter and the young man's mother, convince me of the fact; and I am also aware, that, owing to some youthful imprudences, the stern father has now cast off the bastard from his protection. Well, sir, I know, and from experience—bitterly, bitterly—that the day will come when the ties of kindred and natural affection, that only *seem* loosened by the intervention of the passions, will close—and close—and close—till his heart shall feel choked with the pressure. I know that Mr. Vesper will raise his head, were it from even his dying pillow, and bless the man who could say to him—'Behold your son! I befriended him in your desertion—I took him by the hand when you cast him away—I saved him from the ruin to which you devoted him!'"

"And what have *you* to do with all this?" asked Mr. Fisher; "will *you* be one of the comforters at William Vesper's bedside?"

"Perhaps not; for ought I know it may be my turn first; but if so, I shall at least die with an uncovered face. It will be some satisfaction, after so many years of winding, and sneaking, and skulking, to turn at last to bay. The forgiveness of a good man will be upon my head, and his blessing in my ears, and I shall raise up my face boldly among my fellowmen, and cry with a last loud voice—Wilkins is no more! Ho! I am Richard Watson!—and my spirit shall pass to its account, with the satisfaction of having enjoyed at least one moment's virtuous liberty, in a life of folly, and crime, and bondage."

"You have earned the reward," said Mr. Fisher, with perhaps more appearance of coldness than he felt.

"And you may do with it what you will."

"Give me your promise, then, on paper."

"You doubt my word?"

"I doubt nothing—and I believe nothing. I am a man of business; give me your written promise, or you have given nothing." Mr. Fisher wrote the promise, and put it into the agent's hand.

"And now, sir," said he, "since your business is dispatched, you will condescend, I presume, to attend to mine. It is my intention—however idiotical a face you may think it necessary to assume on the occasion—to marry Miss Howard; who has already from some punctilio, which neither you nor I know anything about, refused my hand. Wilkins!" continued Mr. Fisher, "I do not know how it is, but this project has become a part of my soul; it is woven in even with the dreams of my ambition, and the airy pageants of my pride. Birth, riches, and political connexion; all these I already

possess—and, in addition to all these, I would have the most beautiful and the most virtuous wife in the empire!" He walked up the room, his face glowing, and his eyes sparkling, and stood for some moments at the window, looking into the street. Then turning again to Wilkins, with a composed look, and firm, proud tone—

"She lives," said he, "in a retired cottage in the outskirts of Lambton. It shall be your duty—executed with all gentleness—simply to place her in my chariot which shall be in waiting. The rest I undertake myself. Clive shall accompany us—silence! not a word—not a look!—Slave, the Saturnalia are past, and I am master once more!—I have felt deeply enough already the inconvenience of having more tools than are necessary. Clive will be useful; he possesses both talent and manageability—two rare virtues in their union. Talk him over—*you* know how. Promise any thing—every thing. To-morrow night, you will be here at ten to a minute;—mark me, sir, *both*."

He then left the room, muttering between his teeth, when he had gained the passage—"Ay, he will be useful in more ways than one, he shall *earn* his collectorship. Watson thinks himself clever—but I did not pledge myself to time!"

The agent slowly made his exit by another way, muttering between *his* teeth—"He shall go, then—but to the rendezvous, as he shall think, of mutual and adventurous love.—Once safe in the collectorship, I shall teach him to foil the villain, if I hang for it."

## CHAPTER XII.

### *The Hit,*

Even so it fared. And dark round Lynden grew
Misfortune's troubles; and foreboding fears
That rose like distant shadows, nearer drew,
O'ercasting the calm evening of his years;
Yet still amidst the gloom fair hope appears,
A rainbow in the cloud. And for a space,
Till the horizon closes round, or clears,
Returns our tale—

PRINGLE'S GLEN-LYNDEN

"To the Mount! To the Mount!" cried Mr. Vesper, as he issued from Mrs. Clive's house: "Let me shake off this dotage of an unripe old age; let me awaken from a dream, which has fastened upon my heart like a night-mare! Fie, fie! let me return to the Curate, and backgammon—a much fitter amusement for my years than a game at battledore and shuttlecock, where I am myself the empty thing which is tossed about from one player to another, rejected, baffled, and laughed at by both. A shuttlecock, said I? Why, I am the absolute pantaloon of a pantomime, skipping, and rushing, and tumbling from one end of the stage to the other, knocking myself and others down, and shoving in my head where I have no business, only to receive a slap in the face for my pains."

Before reaching the inn, however, some pangs almost of remorse shot through his heart. Is it possible, thought he, that she can be innocent? So young, so fair, so humble, so devout, is it yet possible that she can have awakened the

enmity of the base even by her unpretending virtues? His heart answered "Yes;" but his judgment shook the head. Absorbed in reflection, he strode up the stairs and entered his apartment without being aware that he was followed by some one; and, on turning round when he heard the door shut behind him, he was, for the moment, startled to find himself alone with a woman whose loose cap, dishevelled hair, and agitated manner indicated, as he supposed, something not very wide of insanity.

"Judge not," cried Mrs. Merton—"judge not, lest ye be judged! I know what you have heard, and I know, from that gloomy eye, what you believe. But if you had seen her as I saw her—if you had heard her as I heard her—if you had prayed beside her as I did, with our knees on the grave, and the dead lying around us—oh, I am sure that you at least would not cast her off to a second and bitterer orphanship than she has yet sustained!"

"My good woman," said Mr. Vesper, catching suddenly hold of her arm—"tell me all, and at once—or rather tell me only which way she has gone, for my heart believes you."

"She has fled from a villain, although without knowing half his villainy, and from the malice and uncharitableness of those—among whom I was myself one—who were too ignorant and too wicked to understand her. Where she has gone—alas! I can only point to the west; but money, spirit, and activity can do any thing.—For shame, get up, and be a man, (for Mr. Vesper had sat down exhausted)—take a post-chaise, and drive in the direction towards Lambton; she cannot have got far, poor thing, alone, and on foot, and without friends or money, to speed her on her way." Mr. Vesper started up, a hectic glow burning on his withered cheek.

"I am surely not so old a man," said he, as if communing with himself, "not so very old! and yet I feel my limbs grow weak, and my breath fail. What of that? My heart is

still stout and true; I can at least sit in a postchaise and direct the pursuit. True, she cannot be far off, and I shall be able to track her as we do the moon through clouds, by her halo." He had reason to believe, however, almost to know that she was not at Lambton, and the nearer villages, therefore, whether in or out of the line of road, were first to be examined. "Can it be," thought he, "that any mistake has occurred?" and he paused on the steps of the vehicle—"I will not trust Mrs. Clive's information; and yet there will be risk in going direct so far as Lambton. I will write; yes, Mrs. Caldwell, the woman whose husband I saved from prison, will be happy to have an opportunity of returning the service by making the necessary inquiries, and she can address to me at the furthest town I shall have to visit in my search." The letter was written and dispatched, the journey commenced and finished, and towns, villages, and hamlets visited and explored: the feverish glow yet burned in Mr. Vesper's cheek, his limbs were weaker and his breathing more oppressed, and as at length he tore open Mrs. Caldwell's answer, it was with a quaking heart and a trembling hand.

"Honoured sir" ran the epistle, "there is no young lady of that name in Lambton. Happy should I be to behold again my benefactor, but I must entreat him to avoid a neighbourhood, visited at present by the anger of the Lord, in the shape of typhus———"The paper fell from Mr. Vesper's hands, and a loud groan broke from his lips. The disease brought on by unwonted hurry and agitation of mind, and hitherto controuled by his moral energy, took advantage, like a skilful foe, of the moment of weakness and confusion, and he was carried to bed by the servants, and did not rise again for many days. Although still weak and bewildered, he was at length able to stand once more upon his feet, and the first use he made of his recovered liberty of action was to drive express to Llanwellyn, to which place he had given instructions for all his letters to be addressed. Two of those heart-striking bits of paper awaited him, but his eye turned sickening away from the masculine characters in the super-

scription of both. Helen had not written! The date of the post-marks, however, awakened a painful interest; they were some days old, and he opened them with a vague feeling of alarm. The first was from Burnet, and ran as follows:—

"Dear Sir,

"I have acted upon your suggestion and I am overjoyed to say, with considerable success. With the assistance of a Mr. Wigwam, whom I believe you know, I was able to trace back the history of Wilkins till I found him at Bristol, under his real name of Watson. I immediately proceeded to that town, and having ascertained by the files of newspapers that a vessel sailed for America about the date of Watson's disappearance, it became my business to discover the names of the passengers, and as many of the particulars of their appearance and history as the lapse of time rendered possible. These inquiries convinced me that if a gentleman who had passed by the name of Ormond was not the object of my search he had not sailed from this port. About Mr. Ormond I could for some time learn no particulars whatever; but at length on carefully inspecting the newspapers of the period, I was led to conjecture that some circumstances of haste or concealment must have attended his departure. A trunk was advertised as having been left behind by him through mistake; and as it was described as bearing the letter V, you may imagine that the eagerness of my pursuit was increased tenfold. The trunk I found was claimed by a creditor at Wells; and on proceeding to that town, I learn that in fact a person whom I had no difficulty in identifying with the passenger, had at the very time deserted his family, and fled from his creditors, while the forsaken wife resumed her maiden name of Howard, and left the town, no one knew for what quarter. This lady, I feel convinced, from the coincidence of dates and other circumstances, was the late Mrs. Howard, of Llanwellyn, a virtuous and amiable woman, whose daughter, to whom you may be directed by Mrs. Clive—you have a better opportunity of interrogating than I. God grant that

Helen Howard may prove to be your niece! Unless she has failed in a very remarkable manner in the promise of her youth, she will be an honour even to you. I cannot help still feeling anxious on the subject of this singular and interesting search. If I do not hear from you in a very few days I shall conclude that some unforeseen circumstance has occurred to prevent your being in Llanwellyn at the time you expected, and shall instantly go down myself. It is contrary I know to the forms of business—but my wife will not let me close this letter without telling you—I do not know what, for her voice is choked, and tears are in her eyes. I remain dear sir, with sincere respect and gratitude, your obedient servant

"RICHARD BURNET."

The effect which this letter produced on the shattered nerves of Mr. Vesper, may be conceived. He wept and prayed by turns—sometimes giving way to a burst of joy and tenderness, and sometimes trembling and turning pale as the withering thought assailed his heart, that this perhaps too late discovery might serve only as a mockery or a chastisement. The other letter was, if possible, of a still more agitating nature; and when he had read it, he stood for some time silent and aghast, whilst a sense of evil almost amounting to despair, seemed weighing him down to the dust.

"Sir,

"Mr. Burnet having communicated to me the result of his enquiries on the subject of your brother's family, I hasten to give you this additional piece of information. You must know that at the village of Lambton I have a bit of a chit—a little fair-haired girl—my only child above ground, to whom I have managed one way and another, to give a little schooling, and clothing, and boarding, and lodging. She never knew, and never will know, that her father stole the supplies from his hunger, when he could not wrest them from the more fatal gripe of his thirst. I am proud of it now; and God knows I have nothing else to be proud of—for as to my

picking you out of the stones in Southampton Street, it was a mere impulse of the moment, such as might have served me on another occasion to knock a man down. Well, sir, this poor little creature writes to me once every month, for I will not take the word of any body else that she is alive; and indeed I would have gone to see her myself, but that, somehow or other—it is a humiliating thing for a father to say it—I did not feel comfortable in the idea of looking my own child in the face. But to the point. Amidst the chit-chat with which I am entertained in her letter of to-day, she tells me that she has gone to 'a new-come school mistress—*one Miss Howard*,' who is so 'young, and pretty, and kind, and sorrowful, and—so and so. Now, sir, neither the name nor description is very common, and school mistresses, you know, migrate sometimes as well as their scholars. However, if she is not to be found at Llanwellyn, do not, as you love your life, lose a moment in proceeding to Lambton. If I am not mistaken in her individuality, she is there in the fangs of an old jade, Caldwell, who —although my innocent child of course knows nothing about the matter—has for many years past acted an infamous part in catering for the pleasures of a Mr. Fisher, a profligate man of rank whose property lies near *Llanwellyn*. Where Dick Burnet can be in such times, I cannot imagine; however, if I do not hear from you in a day or two, I will myself put my broken leg on the top of the coach, and go down to Lambton. The business will be an introduction to my daughter which I need not blush for; and the spirit of her mother will no longer walk between us, as I have often seen it, drawing a circle round her child which I durst not enter. I am, dear sir, your grateful and devoted, Jack—no, John Wigwam."

When Mr. Vesper recovered from a kind of stupor into which he was thrown by these letters, he jumped into a post-chaise with all the activity of five and twenty, and at ten o'clock the same evening reached Lambton. All was safe! The name of the young school-mistress was known at the inn, and he was directed to her cottage in the outskirts of the town.

He was weary—nay, faint and exhausted; and Helen had in all probability retired to bed. Would it not be better to prepare himself by a night's rest for the agitating interview; and when the light of a new day awoke her to intrepid thought and virtuous exertion, to fling suddenly upon that noble heart the light of hope and happiness? Restless, yet not uneasy, Mr. Vesper by degrees forgot his fatigue; he fell into his old habit of pacing up and down the room, and lost himself in painful recollections, and delightful anticipations. Again he hung in fancy over the death-bed of his father, and looked round the apartment with a glance of remembered horror for the spectres conjured up by the dying man. His breath came thick; he was surrounded by the shadowy forms that gathered round the pillow of death; his unhappy brother—the forsaken wife—the friendless orphan—all stood palpably beside him. Then, suffering, rather than impelling, his thoughts to flow downwards on the current of time, he found himself sweeping past many a pointed rock and overhanging precipice, many a dreary flat, and howling waste in his life's voyage; till arriving suddenly within the verge of the present, his dim eyes glittered with unexpected delight, and his heart trembled both with fear and joy.

"Tush!" cried he, striking his unsteady limbs with the brown cane which he still held in his hand—"I am not so old as you would persuade me! A walk on this beautiful night will but compose my mind for sleep. I will only just *look* at the cottage that contains her, and lifting up my hands in that holy moonlight, thank my God with an unfettered soul for his mercies."

It was indeed a beautiful night. The round moon stood serene and bright in the heavens; supreme and alone, the stars that are her hand-maids were lost in the radiance. The distant hills, the stirless trees, the lake distinguished by its deeper black and more dazzling white, the crowd of human habitations, with their lights and shadows, still, solemn, breathless, impressed the spectator with a feeling of admiration ex-

alted, and yet tranquillized by awe; he could not even have prayed aloud. On passing the opening of a green lane, at the westward end of the town, Mr. Vesper observed, half hidden in the shade, an object which startled him at first merely by its incongruity with the scene. It was a handsome travelling chariot. The postillion, dismounted, was leaning, apparently asleep on the neck of one of his horses, and three figures, concealed in the shade, sat motionless in the interior. When Mr. Vesper had passed, his heart began to beat thick, and a feeling of indefinite alarm took possession of his mind He pressed eagerly on, however, to the cottage described to him, which stood close by, and, striking the wall with his hand—

"We part no more!" exclaimed he aloud, though in an under-tone, "in life and in death I am with you!" Every thing was silent within, and the little windows in front were completely dark. He stole softly round to the back of the house, where he found to his inexpressible relief, by the light issuing through the chinks of the window-shutters, that Helen had not yet retired to bed. He could even see into the interior; and he debated with himself whether he should not tap at the window and warn her of the supposed danger.

Helen was seated at the table, where lay some old papers and a closed book. She leaned her head upon her hand, looking downwards as if perusing some paper before her, and Mr. Vesper was struck with pity and alarm at the excessive paleness of her face, which exhibited all the tokens of recent illness, while her cheeks wet with tears denoted present grief. The next moment her bosom rose with a convulsive throb, but was arrested midway by strong resolution; and she sat for some time like one of those beautiful creations of genius, in which the art of the sculptor seems to seize and petrify an emotion or a passion, like torrents frozen in their fall. Slowly, almost imperceptibly, at length her bosom fell, and the unseen witness imagined that he heard a low, long sigh accompany the action; she then pushed gently away with one

hand the paper on which she had been gazing, and rested the other on the book which lay beside her.

The paper thus placed within the scope of his observation, Mr. Vesper could not avoid discovering to be a china-ink portrait of William Clive, which she had once shewn him with her other drawings. They had exchanged these memorials, it seems, in very early youth. "God help my holy child," said Mr. Vesper, a tear starting to his eye, and a smile hovering on his lip, "my poor Helen is a woman still!" From a feeling of delicacy he retired from the window; and unwilling, if it could be avoided with safety, to break in upon her solitude at such a moment, he determined once more to examine the object which had given him so much alarm.

If the carriage was still stationary, he might have time to run to the nearest houses and rouse the inmates, although this in fact appeared to him to be proper only as a precautionary measure against a barely possible danger. The carriage was still stationary, but not so the travellers, for Mr. Vesper, as he crept along the shady side of the road, was very near plunging into their presence.

"Mr. Fisher," remarked one of them, "should wait no longer," and Mr. Vesper, at once terrified by the name and heart-struck by the voice, which awakened a terrible suspicion, stood rooted to the spot. The speaker was apparently a young man, of a tall and elegant figure. He leant against a tree with folded arms, and his face, concealed from Mr. Vesper, was raised towards the moon. The next moment he turned his head with a sigh, and discovered the features of William Clive! Mr. Vesper quickly averted his eyes, and recoiled as one would from some loathsome and deadly snake.

Scarcely had he regained his post at the back window to give the alarm to Helen, and then defend with his life if necessary the entrance, when he heard a loud knocking at the door. Helen, he could see, started up in terror and surprise; her first motion was to run to the door, but she was arrest-

ed by a storm of blows upon the shutter from Mr. Vesper. The knocking was then renewed with greater violence, and answered instantaneously by the window-shutter, which Mr. Vesper, missing the bolt in his agony, in vain endeavoured to tear open. The affrighted girl looked from one side to another, as the noise assailed her ears, in the most helpless perplexity; and at length, the slight fastenings of the door giving way, a man burst into the apartment.

"I mean you no harm," said Wilkins, "none on my life! and I know a man in the village who will mend your door for a mere trifle."

"What is your pleasure, sir?" inquired Helen in a firm and dignified tone, as she recovered her presence of mind.

"Nay," said Wilkins, "it is no pleasure of mine. I guess from your situation and circumstances that it can be but some passing caprice which has made you refuse Mr. Fisher, and so, a ride in his carriage, which waits in the lane, can do no harm. It is his whim, and *must* be complied with; but if you fear violence, I pledge myself solemnly that I will myself remain behind the carriage to protect you." He seized her hand as he spoke, and looked for the first time full in her face.

"I will rather," said Helen, after a moment's deliberation, "I will rather trust myself to the ruffian master than his ruffian hireling. Inform your employer, that before his strange invitation can be accepted, it must be delivered by himself in person."

Wilkins continued staring at her some moments after she had spoken, and then pressing his hand upon his forehead, like one in pain.

"It is strange," said he, as if unconscious of the presence of another, "it is strange how events come round! What have I to do with this family? I required them not, I sought them not; and yet, go where I will, they confront me like

a witness, or lie in wait for me like a snare. I ruined the father, and through him I beggared and murdered the grandfather; and now, in the third generation, the same destiny throws me in, perhaps fatal contact, with the last living descendant! Destiny!—Idle, mischievous word!—I feel at this moment that my own soul is the master of my fate. Come what may, I will not run the risk of injuring one hair of her head! Clive," continued he, as he went out, "behold the original of the portrait!" and William rushed into the room.

Helen sprung from a chair, on which she had sunk, and ran with a rapid and unsteady step to meet him; but, stopping abruptly in the middle of the floor, she fixed a gaze of surprize and apprehension on his face. William seemed at first so crushed and confounded by her appearance, that he looked as if about to sink into the earth, and when she approached him, he staggered back like one whose path is crossed by a spectre; but regaining almost instantaneously his firmness, he advanced, and said in a steady voice, but with a white and trembling lip—"I came here, madam, prepared to act my part in a comedy, but as I perceive we are alone, there can be no need for such mummery. I am ready to attend you to the carriage." At these words Helen threw back her head aghast, and the colour fled from her face; but the next moment, her eye lightened, her cheek burned, her form seemed to rise and distend, and she cast a look of withering disdain upon her lover.

"What, in the name of God," cried he, "does this mean? Is it possible—" and he rushed forward, and seizing both her hands, looked into her scornful eyes with a gaze that seemed to search for her very soul.

"It means," cried Mr. Vesper, dashing the casement to pieces with one vigorous blow, "it means that you are a villain and a traitor, the hireling of one who is the meanest, and vilest, and most abject of the human race!" Helen had turned her head at the interruption; but when she

looked again for William's answer to the accusing witness he had vanished.

A scuffle was heard at the door, where Wilkins appeared, to have been listening; and as this was followed by the hurried sound of their retreating steps, an exclamation from the agent fell like a knell upon her ear. "They are both armed, by ——!"

She staggered some steps towards the door; but her feet, as if transfixed to the ground, seemed to refuse to bear her further; she threw back her long tresses, bent forward her head, and listened with the intensity of one whose whole faculties of soul and sense were concentrated in her hearing. By degrees her weak frame began to tremble, till at length the very apartment was shaken by the fierceness of her agitation; her repressed breath rose moaningly from her bosom in spite of her struggles to withhold it, and as two shots were fired almost simultaneously without, she fell without a start or scream, upon the floor.

When Helen recovered her senses, she found herself sitting on the floor, supported by Mr. Vesper, who knelt by her side. She cast her eyes feebly yet wildly round the room, and the moment they had rested on the face of her lover, who lay covered with blood upon the carpet, she broke from her uncle's arms, and, forgetful of time, place, sex—of every thing which chains the soul to the formalities of society—threw herself on her knees beside him, pressed his cold hand to her throbbing bosom, kissed passionately his frozen lips, and called upon his name with all the frantic tenderness of a woman who loves, and who despairs. After the first moments of agitation were over, she assumed the part of a doctress and a nurse; and when she had washed away the blood and chafed his temples, the wounded man opened his eyes.

At this moment a tumultuous sound of voices and footsteps was heard without, and immediately after Burnet entered

the cottage with his hand twisted into the neckcloth Mr. Fisher, and followed by Wigwam, hopping on one leg, and lovingly arm and arm with Wilkins, whom he threatened with the hammer end of a broken crutch.

"Look ye, sir," said Wilkins, shaking off his guard with one effort, and stepping up to Mr. Vesper, "that young lady is your niece! I ask no further testimony, and I can give none, than her very extraordinary resemblance to her mother, who is now a saint in heaven. This information you should have had from me long before now, had I not been ignorant of the fact myself: I dared not venture, for the purpose of making inquiries, into a quarter, where my first step would have been upon the scaffold. My hopes and fears are now over, I will be a slave no longer; I cheerfully exchange my worthless and wretched life for one hour of freedom. You, sir, are a justice of the peace: I charge this man with a conspiracy against the liberty and honour of Helen Vesper, lately called Helen Howard, and I offer myself, having a guilty knowledge of the offence, as king's evidence. Now villain, do your worst—I am Richard Watson!"

"Rebellious slave," muttered Mr. Fisher—"I will make you writhe for this! A word with you Wilkins."

"Watson, sir, Watson, Watson—Richard's himself again!" shouted the self-delivered.

"You are to take notice, sir," remarked Mr. Vesper, who knew something of the unfortunate man's story, "that I cannot act as a justice of the peace in this county. I have heard your charge simply as a friend; and, as a friend, I would advise, if relieved from my fears for the life of this young man to whom I begin to perceive I have done gross injustice—"

"My dear sir," said William faintly, "have no fears for me. Agitation, it is true, and loss of blood, hopes, dreams, memories—all gushing upon me at once, have half drowned me; but I shall recover, you may depend upon it, and that speedily

—provided I am well nursed," and he looked tenderly into Helen's face, who in stooping to adjust his pillow, at once hid her blushes and gave him assurance of her care.

"Mr. Vesper is right," said Burnet, "compounding a felony, to be sure, is bad in law; but, hang it, there are some offences which we must try by the spirit, not the letter of British justice. Come, Mr. Fisher, you have to go before your constituents in a few months, and a candidate at a popular election should take care of what he is about!" The legislator pondered for some moments.

"If Mr. Watson's conscience," said he, "has tormented him I do not see why it should be charged to me. My family have forgiven him long ago; and so far from accepting his services, as perhaps he will insinuate, in return for my forbearance, it was only yesterday I presented to Mr. Clive, at his instance, a very handsome government situation. However, I am ready to give ease to the poor man's mind in any way that may be proposed. As for my conduct on the present occasion, as I am not now before my constituents, I do not feel myself called upon to explain; and Mr. Clive, I believe, will allow that he owes his hurt to no other cause than his own impetuosity." Watson hardly waited for the conclusion of this speech than he threw up his hat, and danced about the room like a child.

"I say, Mr. Wilkins—" cried Wigwam, whom he almost overturned in his pirouettes—"none of your——"

"Perish the name!" shouted the agent, hitting him a slap upon the mouth which made the room ring again—"I am Richard Watson!"

## CHAPTER XIII.

### *Settling the Winnings.*

The shadow of the earth, anon,
Removes and drawis by,
Syne in the east, when it is gone,
Appears a clearer sky.

ALEXANDER HUME.

Thus with succeeding turns, God tempereth all,
That man may hope to rise, yet fear to fall.

SOUTHWELL.

"TO THE CURATE."

"My worthy Friend,

"My game of life is played, and now at length we shall get back to backgammon again. When I reflect upon the occurrences with which my history has been crowded since I left the Mount, I cannot choose but marvel at the wisdom of God and the folly of man. Justly, indeed, did you accuse me of presumption in placing myself as a providence over these two young people; and by many a bitter and contumelious token have I learnt what is my proper place in the scale of creation. In vain did I put in play the common instruments with which a man seeks to obtain and preserve an influence over his fellows: wealth would not buy, power would not controul, advice would not prevail. In vain I stretched forth my hand, its grasp was on empty air; in vain I lifted up my voice, its sound was as the sound of a voice crying in the barren wilderness. I exercised kindness and my benefits were scattered on the wind; I endeavoured to be just,

and my judgment was turned into perversity; I strove to be merciful, and my mercy was poured upon the head of its object like a vial of cursing and wrath; I ran to and fro, like a man walking in his sleep, whose contact with his fellows must be either vain or hurtful; I lay down, as if oppressed with the night-mare, which presented to my desperate eyes events of interest and doom, while with chained, limbs and stifled voice I writhed and struggled unobserved.

"But, imagine me for a moment possessed of the *power* I coveted! I shudder at the idea. Had I been stone-blind, as justice, the most clear-sighted of all the moral attributes, is absurdly represented to be by the poets, I might hope that, deterred from action, by doubt and timidity, I might at least have done little harm; but with distorted optics—surrounded with illusions—reasoning upon false appearances—and building determinations upon shadows, I can only render thanks to God that my efforts were as ineffective as my judgment was erroneous.

"I have at length heard tidings of my brother's family; nay, the heroine of my little romance, is herself my niece. The coincidence is remarkable—and not the less so that from the first moment in which our eyes met, I found myself attracted to her, as if by some magic charm! But, drop your eyebrows, my old friend. In a world of mystery like this, there would be nothing very strange, even in the discovery of some nicer instincts than have as yet been demonstrated by the moral anatomist; although in the present case it is unnecessary to dive further into the constitution of the mind, than we have already explored. The attraction was nothing more than a resemblance to my dead brother, so exquisitely softened by the peculiarities of sex, and so delicately blended with the more intellectual traits of the mother, as to be invisible till pointed out. At this moment I can hardly conceive how it could have escaped me so long; every thing is his—except the expression.

"To understand thoroughly the character of this young

creature it is necessary to become acquainted with her history. At present, however, I may just remark that she exemplifies in a very powerful manner the vast responsibility that rests upon a parent, and, above all, a mother. Not so much the child as the companion of that admirable woman from the very dawn of intellect, her soul seems to have imbibed its nourishment, and to have received its form and character from her mother by a process as natural as that which transfused the stream of life into her veins without impoverishing the parent source. The remarkable circumstance, to a stranger would be, that the moral resemblance continued to exist, and even to improve, after the original had been removed for ever from her eyes—that the intervention of the world, the collision of other spirits and other opinions, the very growth and development of the rebellious instincts of nature, should not have warped her youthful mind from its original form, and stamped a new impress upon her faculties.

"The explanation is, that her mother's precepts—or rather the gradual influence she exerted—had no reference to time but as a stepping place to eternity. She wandered, it is true, through the world, 'dreeing her weird' like a participator in the first sin, and an inheritor of its punishment; she wept and smiled, and joyed and sorrowed, and hoped, and trembled, and loved:—but, although scorning not the portion that had been thus meeted out to her—although no more attempting to extirpate the human instincts of her mind than the cravings of the senses which watch over the preservation of the principle of mortal life—although conceding all due importance to the things of the world, and feeling, with perhaps more than due intensity, all the sweetness and bitterness of her woman's heart, she knew that these were rather to be thankfully accepted, or patiently endured, than shunned or cherished; that they were nothing more than the flowers and weeds shedding their poison or their perfume by the way-side, where she journeyed,

'———A pilgrim Zion-ward.'

Thus, even while walking hand in hand on this earth, the speculations of the mother and daughter were extended beyond the narrow horizon of mortal views, and their communings were like those of spirits as well as women; and thus, when the grave closed over the former, the soul that cannot die seemed to remain as usual to advise, to comfort, and sustain, and Helen in the midst of the tears she shed for her earthly parent, rejoiced in her continued intercourse with her immortal friend.

"So intimate is the union between the human and divine affections in our mysterious nature, that I have always observed the former to be strongest in those breasts when the latter are most triumphant. As conviction of her lover's unworthiness gathered thicker in Helen's mind, I could see the glow of young life withering on her cheek and dying in her eye. What was the nature of her solitary meditations I cannot tell; how strongly she hoped, how darkly she despaired—but at length when she saw him lying pale, bleeding, and deathlike at her feet, the human feelings had their revenge. She saw him only as the being her fancy had painted, when she admired without shame, and loved without remorse; the interval of separation disappeared from her memory; the doubts and fears that had brooded like thunder-clouds over her head, were swept away by the strong breath of passion; the very delicacies and proprieties of sex and circumstance vanished from her eyes, and she threw herself upon her knees, and clasped him in her arms in an agony of love, sorrow, and despair.

"Even her dismay, when returning recollection had shown her on what a precipice she stood, was mingled with a trusting tenderness. She seemed to exclaim to herself:—'Oh! no, he is not *base*! He is still rash, and thoughtless, but high-minded, generous, and brave. Who knows that the other calumnies which have blackened his name are not equally unfounded?' The instinct of her heart was true, the avowals and explanations of his associates clearly proved his freedom

from any of the deeper moral guilt we had imputed to him; and, although by no means absolved from the charge of gross imprudence, he stood before us after passing through the seven-times heated furnace of the metropolis, the same manly, upright, and single-hearted young man who had won the affections of Helen, and given over his own.

"This letter will be delivered to you by Mr. Richard Watson, a person, who, through a life of error and trouble, seems to have preserved at bottom a kindly heart. He is a man of considerable ability and much knowledge of the common business of the world. It is my wish that he should in the meantime be employed as an assistant by the land-steward, with the view of his taking the place of that respectable old man when the increasing infirmities of age compel him to retire.

"If the share in the projected County newspaper, which was lately offered to me, is still open, I should be glad to purchase it, on highly advantageous terms to the parties, provided I am allowed to nominate the editor.—The gentleman I have in view, is Mr. Wigwam, of London, a man of great experience and address, and one to whom, under Providence, I am indebted for my life.

"Let Betty have the house in order for the reception of a large party which I propose bringing with me shortly—a wedding party, for aught I know; but these are secrets which as yet I cannot fathom. Let her know also, that I hope she will be prepared to submit with a good grace to the controul of a housekeeper, a Mrs. Merton, a very worthy woman, known and endeared, by the exchange of the social charities, to my niece. Inquire carefully into the actual circumstances of the poor of the village and neighbourhood. I disapprove, generally speaking, of the unsustained bounty which one day spreads a feast and the next permits a famine; but, nevertheless, I am determined that, on the approaching festival of love and gratitude, the whole neighbourhood shall rejoice with me, and more especially that unhappy part of it who

have few joys of their own. In the meantime, my valued friend, adieu. When we meet next I shall have much both to do and to say; I shall demand my revenge for the gammon, you won of me at our last trial; and when we are tired of the rattle of the dice, will play over again, for the satisfaction of your curiosity, my Game of Life."

The party announced in the foregoing letter made their appearance in due time at The Mount; and the Curate facetiously remarked; that the balance of the sexes was very nicely adjusted; the importation, consisting of Mr. Vesper and his niece, Mrs. Clive and her son, Mr. Burnet and his wife, Mr. Wigwam and his young daughter, Mr. Watson and Mrs. Merton. The bells of the village church rang a merry peal on the occasion, and Mr. Vesper, although disliking the ostentation, could not find in his heart to stop it. The party dismounted at the door, in the midst of the acclamations of a crowd assembled to receive them. Their first greetings were directed to their old friend and benefactor, but the next moment the most eager curiosity was manifested to discover his niece.

It happened that as the travellers passed through the lines of gazers, the shawl of a paralytic old woman was dislodged by one of their elbows, and fell from her shoulders.—One of the ladies immediately stopped to adjust it, and as she pinned it carefully round the trembling neck it had left bare, her own veil, left at freedom, was blown from her face, and floated back upon the wind.

"It is she—it is Miss Howard. God bless her! God bless her!" rung from the crowd, as the resemblance, both moral and physical, struck their imagination. As for William he was at once recognised by the look of passionate admiration with which he followed his mistress.

"Mother," he whispered, as they entered the door, "why don't you say, God bless her!"

"God bless her, then, my son," replied Mrs. Clive, "God

bless her!" Wigwam closed the procession, supported on one side by a crutch, and on the other by his daughter, his heart swelling with all a father's love and pride.

"I say, Mr. Wil—Watson," said he, poking the agent on the back, as the shout arose," don't you think that was for my daughter?" Mrs. Burnet was criticised as being too pretty and too natural for a "London lady;" but her kindness of manner, and the devout regard with which she seemed to look up in her husband's face made some amends.

The ladies fatigued with their journey, and looking forward to the greater fatigue of a wedding—we will not say how near—retired early from the dinner table. It was William who opened the door for them, and he looked as if well repaid for his politeness, by a stolen glance from Helen, as she passed with trembling step and tingling cheeks, from his presence, and, gentle reader, from ours. When Mr. Vesper and the Curate had followed, which they did soon after, under the plea of infirmity, belied, however, by their fresh and happy look, the chair devolved, we know not why, upon William.

"Come, my friends," said he, "in spite of fashion, I will give you a toast. Mr. Vesper—God bless him!"

"The friend of the friendless!" ejaculated Burnet.

"The adviser and preserver," said Wigwam.

"The restorer and forgiver," added Watson; and rising enthusiastically, they all repeated—"Mr. Vesper—God bless him!"

"To this, according to good old rule, we shall add a sentiment," said the chairman—"come Burnet, the word is yours, and let it be homely, and to the purpose."

Burnet. "Happiness to those who wish it to others!"

*Wigwam.* "With all the honours—hip—ip—ip!"

*Omnes.* "Huzza! huzza! huzza!"

*Wigwam.* "Hip—ip—ip!"

*Omnes.* "Huzza! huzza! huzza!"

*Wigwam.* "Hip—ip—ip!"

*Omnes.* "Huzza! huzza! huzza!"

*Enter Betty.*

*Betty.* "Bless me, gentlemen—the tea is ready, and the ladies waitiug—and I really think———"

*Wigwam stopping her mouth,* "Huzza—a—a!"

[*Exeunt Omnes.*

THE END.

John Clarke, Printer, 7, Franklin Place, Philadelphia.

1951